# CORPVS MONVMENTORVM RELIGIONIS EQVITVM DANVVINORVM (CMRED)

## II

# ÉTUDES PRÉLIMINAIRES AUX RELIGIONS ORIENTALES DANS L'EMPIRE ROMAIN

PUBLIÉES PAR

**M. J. VERMASEREN**

TOME TREIZIÈME

**D. TUDOR**

# CORPVS MONVMENTORVM RELIGIONIS EQVITVM DANVVINORVM

(CMRED)

**II**

LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1976

D. TUDOR

# CORPVS MONVMENTORVM RELIGIONIS EQVITVM DANVVINORVM (CMRED)

## II. THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE MONUMENTS

WITH TWO MAPS AND 15 PLATES

LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1976

*Translated from the French by Christopher Holme*

ISBN 90 04 04493 0

*Copyright 1976 by E. J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands*

*All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or translated in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, microfiche or any other means without written permission from the publisher*

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

# CONTENTS

Preface . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . vii

Part I: Supplementum . . . . . . . . . . . . 1

A. Supplement to the Bibliography and Abbreviations . 1

B. Supplement to CMRED, Vol I . . . . . . . . 5

C. Newly Discovered Monuments. . . . . . . . . 9

1. Dacia Superior 9.—2. Dacia Inferior 12.—3. Moesia Superior 14.—4. Pannonia Inferior 15.—5. Exact Provenance Unknown 20.—6. Late Additions 21.

Part II: Bibliography, Statistics, Technological Problems . 23

A. Survey of the Modern Literature . . . . . . . 23

B. Number of the Monuments and their Area of Diffusion . 51

1. The Circumstances of Discovery 55.—2. The Distinction between the Danubian Rider-God Reliefs and Representations of Other Rider-Gods 58.

C. Technological Problems . . . . . . . . . . 59

1. Materials used in the Manufacture of the Danubian Rider Monuments 59.—2. The Form of the Monuments and their Marginal Decoration 64.—3. The Size of the Monuments 70.—4. Polychromy of Certain Stone Monuments 71.—5. The Absence of Votive Inscriptions 72.—6. Purposes Served by the Monuments 74.—7. Arrangement of Scenes on the Monuments 76.—8. Chronology 78.

D. Classification of the Monuments . . . . . . . 84

Typological and Chronological Development 84.

Part III: Iconographical and Ideological Analysis . . . 99

A. The Great Goddess . . . . . . . . . . . . 99

B. The Rider Gods . . . . . . . . . . . . . 109

C. The Enemies Prostrate under the Horses' Hooves . . 118

D. The Attendants . . . . . . . . . . . . . 122

1. Victoria 123.—2. Mars 124.—3. The Lesser Attendants 127.—4. Nemesis and Hecate 130.

E. Different Theories about the Danubian Gods . . . 137
1. What can be the Origin and Natures of the Danubian Goddess and Rider-Gods? 142.—2. The Problem of the Razgrad Plaques 147.—3. In what Region did the Iconography of the Earliest Danubian Plaques, those with a Single Rider, first take shape? 153.—4. The Doubling of the Single Danubian Rider 161.—5. Organized Religion or Mere Phylacteries? 172.—6. Gnostic and Magical Elements 178.

Part IV: Elements of the Sky and of Nature . . . . . . 181
1. Sol and Luna 181.—2. The Stars 190.—3. The Heavenly Triad and the Divine Banquet 194.—4. The Eagle 199.—5. The Raven 202.—6. The Peacock 203.—7. The Winds 204.—8. The Seasons 205.

Part V: Interpretation of the Mystic Symbols . . . . 207
1. The Fish 208.—2. The Ram 212.—3. The Cock 216.—4. The Snake 219.—5. The Lion 224.—6. The Dog 226.—7. The Symbolic Group of the Four Elements constituting the *Principia Vitae* 227.

Part VI: Rites and Mysteries of the Danubian Rider Religion 232
1. The Man "Fishing", seated before the Tripod with the Ram's Head 234.—2. The Man with Arms Outstretched towards the Crater 236.—3. The *Criobolium* and the *Taurobolium* 237.—4. The *Occultatio* 243.—5. The Initiates and Degrees of the Mysteries 249.—6. The Mystical Banquet of Initiates 255.—7. The Various Symbolic and Cult Objects 262.

Conclusions . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 277

Topographical Index (Monuments) . . . . . . . . . 289
Museum Index . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 290
Epigraphical Index . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 290
Index of Compositional Elements . . . . . . . . . 291
General and Analytic Index . . . . . . . . . . . 294

Plates I-XV and two maps . . . . . at the end of the book

# PREFACE

Nearly forty years have passed since, in the spring of 1936, I submitted a first version of this work, in the form of a doctoral thesis, to the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest. At that time I had established a *Corpus* of 129 monuments. My study excited interest in the problem and resulted in the publication of a whole series of Danubian plaques by Hungarian, Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and other specialists. Thanks to these contributions, happily supplemented by the later discoveries I was able to make when in charge of different archaeological sites in Dacia, I succeeded in enlarging the initial *Corpus*, till today it numbers 232 examples.

Thus it is that today we can add to the 199 bas-reliefs and engraved gems assembled in CMRED I (1969) a further 33 pieces forming a Supplement in the present volume. This new harvest is due to the series of Pannonian plaques communicated by my colleague Edward L. Ochsenschlager (professor of the Brooklyn College of the City University of New York), to whom I am deeply grateful. A second important lot of plaques comes from Tibiscum. For my knowledge of these I am indebted to my colleague Marius Moga, director of the Museum of the Banat at Timişoara (Rumania), who was so extremely obliging as to put them at my disposal even before he himself had published them. I should like to express once more my great gratitude to him. Lastly, I add my thanks to all those who have contributed to the enrichment of the present *Corpus* by information or by the offer of illustrative material in their possession. Dr Maria Cičikova — Sofia; M. Davidescu — Turnu Severin; I. T. Dragomir — Galaţi; I. Mitrofan — Cluj; and Gh. Popilian — Craiova.

The appearance of this second volume of the CMRED has benefitted from the constant help of my colleague M. J. Vermaseren, who sent the author in Rumania the bibliographic material on the subject and also gave his time for numerous scientific consultations by letter. Again, I am deeply grateful to the publishing house of E. J.

Brill, Leiden, for taking on the publication of the present volume. My thanks also to Eve and John R. Harris, who undertook the translation of the first volume into English and at the same time helped me improve the text by their valuable comments. I must also express my warmest thanks to Mr. T. A. Edridge, E. J. Brill's tireless editor, for his generous supervision of this publication.

## PART ONE

# SVPPLEMENTVM

## A. Supplement to the Bibliography and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| *ActaMN* | *Acta Musei Napocensis*, Cluj (Rumania). |
| *ArchClas* | *Archeologia Classica*, Roma. |
| *BCH* | *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, Paris. |
| Benoit, *Héroïs. équest.* | F. Benoit, *L'héroïsation équestre*, Aix 1954. |
| Blinkenberg, *Sabazios* | Chr. Blinkenberg, "Darstellungen des Sabazios und Denkmäler seines Kultes," in *Archaeologische Studien*, Kopenhagen-Leipzig 1904, p. 66ff. |
| Bordenache, *Sculture* | Gabriella Bordenache, *Sculture greche e romane del Museo Nazionale di Antichità di Bucarest*, I: *Statuette e rilievi di culto, elementi architettonici e decorativi*, Bucarest 1969. |
| Brelich, *Aquincum* | A. Brelich, "La religiosità di Aquincum," in *Laueae Aquincenses* I, pp. 139-140. |
| Briem, *Mystères* | O. E. Briem, *Les sociétés secrètes de mystères*, Paris 1941. |
| *CHA* | *Cambridge Ancient History*. |
| Campbell, *MithrIcon* | LeRoy A. Campbell, *Mithraic Iconography and Ideology*, Leiden 1968 (EPRO, 11). |
| | *Catalogo della Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, 4th ed. LIX, 71-72. |
| Cerškov Emil | *Rimljani na Kosovu i Metohiji* [Les Romains en Cossovu et Metohia], Beograd 1964. |
| | *Civiltà romana in Rominia*, Roma 1970, De Luca ed. (Roma, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, via Nazionale, febr.-apr. 1970). |
| *CIL* | *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. |
| *CRAI* | *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, Paris. |
| Cumont, *Myst. Mithra* | Franz Cumont, *Les mystères de Mithra*, 3rd ed., Bruxelles 1913. |
| Cumont, *Relig. orient.* | Franz Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, 4th ed., Paris 1929. |
| *Danubius* | *Danubius-Istorie*, Muzeul de Istorie, Galați (Rumania). |
| Davidescu M.-Florescu R. | "Două plăci de la Drobeta reprezentînd Cavalerii danubieni" [Deux tablettes de Drobeta des Cavaliers danubiens], *ActaMN*,V (1968), pp. 493-494. |
| Delatte-Derchain, | A. Delatte-Ph. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Intailles* | *égyptiennes* (de la Bibliothèque Nationale—Cabinet des Médailles), Paris 1964. |
| Dieterich, *Mithraslit.* | A. Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie,* 2nd ed., Leipzig 1923. |
| Domaszewski, *Relig. röm. Heer.* | A. von Domaszewski, "Die Religion des römischen Heeres", *Westdeut. Zeitschrift,* XIV, 1895. (extract) |
| Dorn, A. | *Znacajni Archeoloski Nalazni Ogledi,* Vukovar, 1960, pp. 33-35 (ap. Ochsenschlager). |
| Dragomir, T. I. | "Cavalerii danubieni din castellum roman de la Tirighina-Barboşi" [Les Cavaliers danubiens du castellum romain de Tirighina-Barboşi], *Danubius* IV (1970), pp. 123-131. |
| Duthoy, *Taurobolium* | Robert Duthoy, *The Taurobolium. Its evolution and terminology,* Leiden 1969 (EPRO, 10). |
| Espérandieu, *Recueil Gaule* | E. Espérandieu, *Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Gaule romaine,* I-XI, Paris 1907-1938. |
| Espérandieu, *Recueil Germ.* | E. Espérandieu, *Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Germanie romaine,* Paris-Bruxelles 1931. |
| Fitz Jenö | *Gorsium. A táci romai korai ásatások,* 4th ed., Székesfehérvár 1970. |
| Fitz Jenö | *A romai kor Fejér Megyében* [Die Römerzeit im Komikat Fejér], in *Fejér Megye Története az öskortól à honfogglaldásig,* 4, Székésfehérvar 1970. |
| Foucart, *Myst. Eleusis* | P. Foucart, *Les mystères d'Eleusis,* Paris 1914. |
| Giglioli S. Q. | "Due gemme basilidiane del Museo Archeologico di Perugia," *ArchClas,* III (1951), pp. 199-210, pl. XLIX, 2. |
| Graillot, *Cybèle* | H. Graillot, *Le culte de Cybèle, Mère des Dieux, à Rome et dans l'Empire romain,* Paris 1912. |
| *Hist. relig. I* | *Historia religionum, Handbook for the History of Religions* (ed. by C. Jouco Bleeker-Geo Windengren); vol. I: *Religions of the Past,* Leiden 1969. |
| Janošić | Iskra-Janošić Ivana, "Rimske votivne pločice od olova u Jugoslaviji" (prilog tipologiji i rasprostiranju) [Römische votiven Bleitafeln in Jugoslavien (Beitrag zur Typologie und Verbreitung)], *OA,* VI (1966), pp. 49-68. (Deutsche Zusammenfassung pp. 61-68). |
| *JDAI* | *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Berlin.* |
| *ILS* | H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones latinae selectae,* Berolini, 1892-1916. |
| *JRS* | *Journal of Roman Studies,* London. |
| Kazarow, *Denkmäler* | G. I. Kazarow, *Die Denkmäler des thrakischen Reitergottes in Bulgarien* (Text-Taf.), Budapest 1938. |
| *Laurae Aquincenses* | *Laurae Aquincenses. Memoriae Val. Kuzsinszky dicatae I,* Budapest 1939. |
| Macrea, M. | *Viaţa romană în Dacia* [La vie romaine en Dacie], Bucarest 1968. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *Magazin Istoric*, Bucarest. |
| | *Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum. Vezetõ a régészetigyüjetemnyben*, Budapest 1938, p. 87, and fig. 87. |
| Merlat, *Rép. JupDol.* | P. Merlat, *Répertoire des inscriptions et monuments figurés du culte de Jupiter Dolichenus*, Paris-Rennes 1951. |
| Merlat, *JupDol.* | P. Merlat, *Jupiter Dolichenus. Essai d'interprétation et de synthèse*, Paris 1960. |
| Mitrofan Ion | "Obiecte romane de la Apulum într-o colecţie din Bistriţa" [Römerfunde aus Apulum in einer Sammlung in Bistriţa], *Apulum*, VIII (1970), pp. 331-335. |
| Mladenova, *Studia Dečev* | Janka Mladenova, "Belejki varhu izobrajeniiata na Dunavskite Konnitzi" [Notes sur les représentations des Cavaliers danubiens], *Studia Dečev*, pp. 548-555. |
| Moga, M. | *Tibiscum*, *BCMI*, XL, 2 (1971), p. 56. |
| Moga, *Tibiscus* | Marius Moga, "Noi tăbliţe votive de la Tibiscum închinate Cavalerilor danubieni" [Nouvelles tablettes votives de Tibiscum dediées aux Cavaliers danubiens], *Tibiscus*, II (1972), pp. 39-51. |
| Nagy T. | Nagy Tibor, *Geschichte der Stadt Budapest*, Budapest, 1941. |
| Nagy T. | Nagy Tibor: D. Tudor, *Corpus Monumentorum Religionis Equitum Danuvinorum (CMRED), I: The Monuments*, Leiden 1969, in *ActaA*, 22 (1970), pp. 445-447 (Review). |
| *OA* | *Opuscula Archaelogica*, Zagreb. |
| Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* | Edward L. Ochsenschlager, "Lead plaques of the Danubian Horsemen type at Sirmium", *Sirmium*, II (1971), pp. 51-68, pl. I-V. |
| Pârvan, *Getica* | Vasile Pârvan, *Getica. O protoistorie a Daciei*, Bucureşti 1926. |
| Piletić Dragoslav | "Rimska kastrum Cuprija-Horreum Margi" [Cuprija-Horreum Margi—A Roman Castrum], *VestVojMuz*, 15 (1969), p. 30. |
| *Pontica* | *Pontica*. Muzeul de Arheologie—Constanţa (Rumania). |
| Pop Constantin | "Din nou despre Cavalerii danubieni" [Toujours au sujet des Cavaliers danubiens], *Sargetia*, VII (1970), pp. 87-93. |
| Pop. C.-Lucăcel V. | Constantin Pop-Vasile Lucăcel, "Un relief al Cavalerilor danubieni în Muzeul din Zalău" [Un relief des Cavaliers danubiens au Musée de Zalău], *Rev. Muz.*, V (1968), p. 356. |
| *RÉG* | *Revue des Études Grecques*, Paris. |
| *RevMuz* | *Revista Muzeelor*, Bucureşti. |
| *RHR* | *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, Paris. |
| *Rhein. Mus.* | *Rheinisches Museum.* |
| *RPHLHA* | *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes*, Paris. |
| | *Römer in Rumänien*, Köln, 1969 (Austell. d. Röm- |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Germ. Mus. Köln und des Hist. Mus.—Cluj. Kunsthalle Köln, 12 Febr.-18 Mai 1969). |
| *Röm. Mitt.* | *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts (Römische Abteilung).* |
| Roscher *Lex.* | Roscher W.H.-Ziegler C., *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie,* I-VII, Leipzig 1884-1937. |
| *Sargetia* | *Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis,* Deva (Rumania). |
| *Sirmium* | *Sirmium. Archaeological Investigations in Syrmian Pannonia* (Ed. by Vladislav Popović and Ed. L. Ochsenschlager, Beograd). |
| *SlavRev* | *Slavic Review. American Quarterly of Soviet and East European Studies.* |
| *SMjP* | *Studii şi materiale—judeţul Prahova,* Ploieşti (Rumania). |
| *Studia Dečev* | *Studia in honorem Acad. D. Décev,* Sofia 1958. |
| *Tibiscus* | *Tibiscus.* Revista Muzeului Banatului, Timişoara (Rumania). |
| *TIR* | *Tabula Imperii Romani.* |
| Toutain, *Cult. païens* | J. Toutain, *Les cultes païens dans l'Empire Romain.* I: *Provinces latines;* II: *Les cultes orientaux,* Paris 1911. |
| Tudor, *OR*$^3$ | D. Tudor, *Oltenia romanǎ,* 3rd ed., Bucureşti 1968. |
| Tudor, *SMjP* | "Relief fragmentar dintr-o reprezentare a Cavalerilor danubieni în Muzeul din Ploieşti" [Relief fragmentaire d'une figuration des Cavaliers danubiens conservé au Musée d'Histoire de Ploieşti], *SMjP,* I (1968), pp. 34-43. |
| Tudor, *Magazin Istoric* | "Cultul Cavalerilor danubieni" [Le culte des Cavaliers danubiens], *Magazin Istoric,* IV, 12 (1970), pp. 26-32. |
| Tudor, *Pontica* | D. Tudor, "Unele aspecte iconografice ale reliefurilor Cavalerilor danubieni din Scythia Minor" [Quelques aspects iconographiques des reliefs des Cavaliers danubiens en Scythie Mineure], *Pontica,* 5, (1971), pp. 503-511. |
| Turchi, *Rel. mist.* | N. Turchi, *Le religioni misteriosofiche del mondo antico,* Roma 1923. |
| Vermaseren, *Mithra* | M. J. Vermaseren, *Mithra, ce dieu mystérieux,* Bruxelles 1960. |
| Vermaseren, *Hist. Relig.* I | M. J. Vermaseren, *"Hellenistic Religions",* in *Hist. Relig.* I, pp. 495-532. |
| *VestVojMuz.* | *Vestnic Vojni Muzei,* Beograd. |
| Wenzel Marian | "The Dioscuri in the Balkan", *SlavRev,* XXVI (1967), no. 3, pp. 363-366 and fig. 4-6. |
| Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.* | G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer,* München 1912.$^2$ |

## B. SUPPLEMENT TO THE CMRED, VOL. I

1. *Bibl. Römer in Rumänien*, p. 213, (sigla F. 93) and Taf. 52. The identification as "Votiv-relief mit thrakischem Reiter" is erroneous.
6. *Bibl. Civiltà romana in Romania*, p. 228, (sigla F. 152), tav. XL.
7. The monument now forms part of the collection of the library "Protopopiatul romano-catolic" at Bistriţa (Rumania). Measurements: 0,17 × 0,17,5 × 0,02 m.
   *Bibl.* Mitrofan, *Apulum*, VIII (1970), p. 331-335, fig. 1.
   a) The goddess wearing a Phrygian cap.
   b) The man in the left-hand bottom corner held an object which is no longer clear (ram's head?, loaf?) and before them is a spiral column with four turns. The man in the right-hand bottom corner held a fish. Between them and the table are a lion and three cups.
27. *Bibl.* Macrea, *Viaţa romană în Dacia*, pl. and *Civiltà romana* in Romania, p. 228, (sigla F. 153), tav. XLI.
30. Measurements: 0,075 × 0,07 × 0,02 m. Formerly in the collection F. Morá-Szegedin.
   *Bibl. Römer in Rumänien*, p. 211, fig. 50 (sigla F. 86); *Civiltà romana in Romania*, p. 228, (sigla F. 154) and C. Pop, *Sargetia*, VII (1970), p. 87, fig. 1.
37. *Bibl.* Tudor, *Magazin istoric*, IV, 12 (45), 1970, p. 28.
38. *Bibl.* Bordenache, *Sculture*, p. 113, no. 254, pl. CVI.
39. *Bibl.* Bordenache, *Sculture*, p. 113, no. 253, pl. CVI.
45. An ancient unpublished drawing of the bronze (now lost) forms part of the collection of the Archaeological Institute of Bucarest, where it may be seen.
49. *Bibl.* Bordenache, *Sculture*, p. 114, no. 258, pl. CVII.
50. *Bibl.* Wenzel, *SlavRev.*, XXVI (1967), no. 3, fig. 5.
51. *Bibl.* Wenzel, *SlavRev.*, XXVI (1967), no. 3, fig. 4.
56. Exact provenance unknown ("gefunden im Donautal"). Belgrade Museum; inv. 1559/II. Measurements: 0,084 × 0,056.
   *Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 65, no. 1, pl. VI/3.
57. Lead roundel, formerly in the collection of the Gymnasium of Požarevać, now in Belgrad Museum.
   *Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 65, no. 5.

60-61. *Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 18.

66. *Bibl.* Cerškov, Rimljanina Kosovu i Metohiji, p. 68 and 120.
67. Inv. 1558/II. Measurements: 0,09 × 0,077 × 0,002 m.
   *Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 62, no. 1.
68. *Ilok* = CVCCIVM is in Pannonia Inferior (not in Moesia Superior!); cf. Nagy, *ActaA*, 22 (1970), p. 447 and *TIR*. L. 34 (Aquincum-Sarmizegetusa-Sirmium), p. 51.
   *Bibl.* Tudor, *Magazin Istoric*, IV, 12 (45), 1970, p. 30.
93. *Bibl.* Bordenache, *Sculture*, p. 113 ,no. 256, pl. CVII.
94. *Bibl.* Bordenache, *Sculture*, p. 113, no. 255, pl. CVII.

**96.** *Bibl.* D. Tudor, *Pontica,* 5 (1972), p. 504, fig. 3.

**98.** *Bibl.* D. Tudor, *Pontica,* 5 (1972), p. 504, fig. 4.

**99.** *Bibl.* Dragomir, *Danubius,* IV (1970), pp. 123-131.

**102.** *Bibl.* Bordenache, *Sculture,* p. 114, no. 257, p. CVII et D. Tudor, *Pontica,* 5 (1972), p. 503, fig. 1.

**103.** *Bibl.* D. Tudor, *Pontica,* 5 (1972), p. 503, fig. 2.

**115.** *Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 65, no. 1.

**116.** Discovered in the "Gradina" area. Measurements: 0,075 × 0,080.
*Bibl.* C. Truhelka, *GlasnikBH,* II (1890), p. 98, fig. 5; Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 12 and Campbell, *MithrIcon,* p. 331, fig. 23.

**117.** Discovered in 1901, in the "Crkvine" area, in Lašvatal. Measurements: 0,094 × 0,079 × 0,017 m.
*Bibl.* Patsch, *GlasnikBH,* XIV (1902), fig. 24 and Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 15.

**120.** Discovered in a colonnade which formed part of an *aedes Augustalium* (not Gymnasium!); cf. Nagy, *ActaA*, 22 (1970), p. 447, n. 14 and Brelich, *Aquincum,* p. 139ff.

**121.** *Bibl. Magyar Nemzeti Múseum. Vezetö a régészetigyjtemenyben,* 1938, p. 87 and fig. 87.

**123.** *Bibl.* Pop, *Sargetia,* VII (1970), p. 90, fig. 5.

**125.** *Mačvanska Mitrovica.* The left-hand corner is missing and there are occasional cracks on the surface of the plaque. Thickness: 3 mm. Correct: Spemska (not Stremska).
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 2, pl. VI/2 and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 54, no. 9.

**126.** *Mačvanska Mitrovica.* The upper left-hand and lower left-hand corners are missing, as is the upper right-hand *acroterion.* Thickness: 3 mm.
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 64, no. 1, pl. VI/1 and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 54, no. 10.

**127.** *Mačvanska Mitrovica.* Discovered in 1905 in the area "Zidine". Complete. Measurements: 0,077 × 0,074 × 0,002 m.
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 7, pl. II/2; Pop, *Sargetia,* VII (1970), p. 89, fig. 2 and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 52, no. 2.

**128.** Measurements: 0,075 × 0,080 × 0,020 m.
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 62, no. 4; Pop, *Sargetia,* VII (1970), p. 89, fig. 3 and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 53, no. 3.

**129.** *Bibl.* Pop, *Sargetia,* VII (1970), p. 89.

**131.** *AD MILLIARE*-Batin: Nagy, *ActaA*, 22 (1970), p. 447; but *AD MILITARE* in *TIR*, L. 34, p. 25!?

**132.** *Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 9 and Pop, *Sargetia,* VII (1970), p. 90, fig. 4.

**133.** Discovered 1882.
*Bibl.* Hoffiller, *Vjesnik,* VIII (1905), p. 119, fig. 2 and Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 13.

**134.** Measurements: 0,061 × 0,049 × 0,025 m.
*Bibl.* Ianošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 62, no. 3.

**135.** Discovered in 1904.
*Bibl.* Hoffiller, *Vjesnik,* VIII (1905), p. 204, fig. 29; Janošić, *OA* (1966), p. 64, no. 3, pl. V/1.

137. *Bibl.* Kubitschek-Loewy, *AEMÖ* (1879), p. 127, no. 8; Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 64, no. 2, pl. IV/1.

138. Discovered in 1901. Measurements: 0,087 × 0,075 m.
*Bibl.* Hoffiller, *Vjesnik*, VIII (1905), p. 123, fig. 6; Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 64, no. 13.

139. Measurements: 0,037 × 0,019 m.
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 65, no. 1.

140. *Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 66, no. 2, pl. VI/5.

141. CORNACUM-Sotin (no CARNACUM), cf. Nagy, *ActaA*, 22 (1970), p. 447 and *TIR*, L. 34, p. 49.
Measurements: 0,094 × 0,076 m.
*Bibl.* Hampel *AÉrt* (1903), p. 347, fig. 47; Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 8.

143. Measurements: 0,090 × 0,077 × 0,002 m.
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 62, no. 2.

144. Measurements: 0,096 × 0,078 m. Inv. II/1556.
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 62, no. 6.

146. *Hrtkovci* (distr. Sremska Mitrovica). The plaque was not found at Selište. Discovered in 1966, now in the Museum at Sremska Mitrovica (no. 420). A small gaping hole appears just right of centre at the top of the plaque and a small piece is broken off the right side. Measurements: 0,11 × 0,091 × 0,003 m.
*Bibl.* Mentioned by D. Tudor, *CMRED*, I, p. 84, no. 146; Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium*, p. 55, no. 13, pl. V/9:
"The scenes are represented on a rectangle bounded on the side by two long snakes which bend around the corners and whose heads are heraldically placed at the top. The plaque is divided into four registers.
a) In the first register, what appears to be the remnants of an eagle is flanked by busts of Sol and Luna. Behind each of them is a star.
b) In the second register, two horsemen flank a female divinity dressed in a *chiton* and *himation* and standing on a base line (pedestal?). Her arms are slightly raised and extended so that one of her hands appears beneath the muzzle of each horse. Behind each of the horsemen appear human figures. The one behind the horseman to the goddess' right has his left hand raised in salute [In reality this is the *Victoria* holding the crown], the one to her left has both arms at his side and may be represented in the nude [In reality the man holds his right hand in salute and has his left hand at his side]. The horses stand on the bodies of humans lying on their stomachs and reaching for a ram's head situated beneath the baseline on which the goddess stands. Each of the horsemen holds some kind of weapon in his upraised hand. In the case of the horseman to the goddess' right it is clearly a double axe, and probably the horseman to her left held the same weapon. [The horseman to the goddess' right is wearing the Phrygian cap].
c) In the third register, a soldier holding a shield and a spear diagonally, with its point upward, faces right. To his right a naked man with his arm extended towards the scene he witnesses, watches a third man flay or disembowel a headless animal hanging from a tree. On the central figure's left is a three-legged table holding a large fish, and beyond it

a lamp on a [three-legged] lampstand. [Above the soldier an indistinct head-shaped object appears].

d) In the fourth register, reading from the viewer's left to right, are two lamps on [three-legged] lampstands, a ram, another lamp on a lampstand, an amphora, a lion, a fire shovel with three lamps above it, and a cock". [Between the lion and the cock are three cups and a horizontal indistinct object similar to a shovel].

**162.** Discovered in the river "Kupa".
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 65, no. 8.

**163.** Discovered in 1847. Measurements: 0,095 × 0,081 m.
*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 11.

**166.** *GORSIVM-HERCVLIA* (Tać) is in Pannonia Inferior (not in Pannonia Superior!); cf. Nagy, *ActaA*, 22 (1970), p. 447; *TIR*, L. 34, p. 62 and Fitz, *Gorsium*, 1970, fig. 4.
*Bibl.* Fitz, *Fejer Megye Története* I, 4, pl. 17, 4.

**172.** Discovered in the "Putinci-Indija" area. Measurements: 0,075 m diameter. Budapest Museum.
*Bibl.* Hoffiller, *Vjesnik*, n.s. XVI (1935), p. 125, fig. 8 and Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 66, no. 3.

**174.** *Bibl.* Tudor, *Magazin Istoric*, IV, 12 (45), 1970, p. 27.

**187.** Jasper green. Inv. M. 6099.
*Bibl.* Delatte-Derchain, *Intailles*, p. 195, no. 259. Description and identification of divinity are erroneous (Nemesis and Dioscuri).

**189.** *Bibl.* Giglioli, *ArchClas*, III (1951), p. 202, pl. L, 2 and Wenzel, *SlavRev.* XXVI (1967), no. 3, fig. 6, c. Giglioli [that on the reverse of the Odescalchi gem (189) was engraved: "Demonic figure: head of a cock, bust dressed with cuirass, flying cloak, feet in form of serpents and holding in the right hand a whip and in the left hand a shield."]
Around the figure is an inscription in Greek lettering:

IAW AΔWNAI MIXAHΛ
KENE

**190.** *Bibl.* Giglioli *ArchClas*, III, 2 (1951), p. 202, no. VI, pl. L, 3; Delatte-Derchain, *Intailles*, p. 195 f., no. 260. The description (Pierre mithriaque!) and the identification of the divinities (Dioscuri-Nemesis-Hecate!!!) are wrong.

**191.** *Bibl.* Giglioli, *ArchClas*, III, 2 (1951), p. 201, no. III.

**192.** *Bibl.* Giglioli, *ArchClas*, III, 2 (1951), p. 202, no. V.

**193.** *Bibl.* Giglioli, *ArchClas*, III, 2 (1961), p. 200, no. II, pl. L, 1 and Wenzel *SlavRev*, XXVI (1967), no. 3., fig. 6, d-e.

**194.** *Bibl.* Tudor, *Magazin Istoric*, IV, 12 (45), 1970, p. 32.

**195.** *Bibl.* Wenzel, *SlavRev*, XXVI (1967), no. 3, fig. 6, a.

**198.** Formerly (1958) in the collection of Count Téléky.

## C. Newly Discovered Monuments

### 1. DACIA SVPERIOR

### *TIBISCVM*

(commune Zăgujeni, distr. Caraş-Severin, Rumania)

My grateful thanks are due to Professor Marius Moga, Timişoara, for the particulars and photographs of newly discovered reliefs at Tibiscum which he has been good enough to supply.

**200.** Round-topped rectangular tablet in white marble, broken into seven pieces; found in the Roman camp(building B). Timişoara Museum (Rumania). Measurements: 0.155 × 0.145 × 0.016 m.

*Bibl.* Moga, *Tibiscus*, II, p. 40, no. 1.

The relief shows a single Rider.

a) In the upper register are five busts: a triad in the middle (a woman flanked by two men), with Sol and Luna (their heads broken) in the corners.

b) In the centre of the principal field a single horseman is riding to the right, wearing a Phrygian cap. With his spear he is striking a man who also wears a Phrygian cap, prostrate face downwards beneath his horse's hooves. Behind the horseman is a man holding the animal's tail with his right hand. In front of the horseman stand a woman and a man clothed in a tunic who holds up a rhyton in his hand.

c) A column with three spiral turns on a base, a vase with a cock above it, a three-legged table bearing a round unidentifiable object (a vase?) and flanked by two men holding hands above the table, and two horizontal bases (altars?).

**201.** Fragment from the bottom right-hand corner of a marble tablet, found in the civilian quarters between an apsidal building and a temple. Timişoara Museum (Rumania). Measurements: 0.139 × 0.097 × 0.025 m.

*Bibl.* Moga, *Tibiscus*, II, p. 6, no. 4.

The relief showed a single Rider.

a) In the centre of the principal field a horseman (only the forepart of whose horse remains) is riding to the right over a man prostrate face downwards on the ground. In front of him are a woman dressed in a long robe making a pouch with her skirt beneath the animal's muzzle, a second similar woman, and a man (only the feet are preserved).

b) In the bottom register a seated youth stretches out his right hand towards a three-legged table on which is a ram's head. Between the man and the table is a dolphin figured upright as though standing on its tail (or hanging by its mouth). Above the man and the table are five circles.

**202.** Four fragments of a rectangular marble relief found in the civilian settlement. The fragments show traces of exposure to fire. Timişoara Museum (Rumania). Measurements: (A-B), 0.155 × 0.098 × 0.023 m.; (C), 0.068 × 0.066 × 0.021 m.; (D), 0.095 × 0.087 × 0.023 m.

*Bibl.* Moga, *Tibiscus*, II, p. 41, no. 2.

The relief showed a single Rider.

A-B, a) Of the top register survives on the right the bust of Luna and in the centre an egg-shaped vessel flanked by two rearing serpents.

A-B, b) In the centre of the principal field may be seen the remains of the Rider's Phrygian cap, the head of a woman, the bust of a second woman putting her right hand to her lips (Nemesis), while on the extreme right is the bust of a bearded man with a Phrygian cap.

C) On this fragment are preserved remains of the feet of the Rider's attendant, a foot of the horse, and a foot of the prostrate man.

D, a) Of the principal field the feet of a woman and the feet of two attendants are preserved.

D, b) In the right lower corner of the bottom register may be seen a seated youth turned full face, stretching out his right hand towards a three-legged table on which is a ram's head. Between the man and the table is a long hanging object (a fish?).

**203.** Clay cast of a rectangular marble tablet. The original is preserved in a private collection. Measurements: 0.180 × 0.125 × 0.010 m.

*Bibl.* Moga, *Tibiscus*, II, p. 47, no. 5.

The relief shows a single Rider.

a) The first register contains in the centre an egg-shaped vessel flanked by two rearing serpents, and at either side a draped bust, of Sol and Luna respectively.

b) In the central field of the principal register is a horseman riding to the right, dressed in tunic, flying cloak, and Phrygian cap. In his right hand he holds a spear with which he strikes a man lying on his back under the horses' hooves. A woman in a long robe welcomes the horse with open arms, and behind her another woman stands similarly dressed, putting her right hand to her lips (Nemesis). In the right-hand corner is a man in a Phrygian cap. Behind the horseman, to the left, are two men in tunics, the one next to the horse holding the animal's tail with his right hand.

c) In the bottom register there are, from the left to right: a bird (cock?), a man dragging a ram towards an altar, three conical vessels above a seated youth in Phrygian cap, stretching out a long object in his right hand towards a three-legged table on which is a ram's head. Between the seated man and the table is a long hanging object (a fish?).

**204.** Rectangular marble tablet with the right-hand corners damaged, found in the civilian settlement (apsidal building). Timişoara Museum, (Rumania). Measurements: 0.145 × 0.117 × 0.018 m.

*Bibl.* Moga, *Tibiscus*, II, p. 42, no. 3.

a) In the upper register are five busts: in the centre a woman with a veil over head and shoulders, flanked by two men, and in either corner Sol and Luna (damaged).

b) In the centre of the principal field is a woman with a long veil, her head flanked by two serpents. Two supporting horsemen advance towards each other at the gallop, bearded, dressed in tunics and Phrygian caps. The one on the left brandishes a double axe in his right hand, while the left hand of the other is defaced. With their leading hooves the horses trample the heads of two prostrate men, of whom the one on the right turns his face to the spectator and raises his right hand.

c) In the bottom register are, from left to right: a column with four spiral turns, above a base, a crater with a cock over it, a three-legged table with a fish on it, a four-legged table with a vessel above, flanked by two men raising their hands over the table, and an animal's head (defaced).

## 2. DACIA INFERIOR

### *DROBETA*: Drobeta-Turnu Severin
### (Rumania)

**205.** Marble roundel found in 1963 during the excavations in the *retentura sinistra* of the *castra*. Porţlie de Fier Museum, Drobeta-Turnu Severin (Rumania). Measurements: 0.116 × 0.123 m.

*Bibl.* Davidescu-Florescu, *ActaMN*, V (1968), p. 492, fig. 2.

The relief is cursorily executed, but was completed by painting, which is not preserved.

a) In the middle of the principal field is a woman with a table on which the fish was no doubt painted. Above the Goddess's head are the busts of Sol and Luna. On either side of her are two supporting horsemen bearded and dressed in tunics and Phrygian caps, raising their hands to strike. Two men prostrate beneath their horses' hooves were completed by painting, which is not preserved. Behind the right-hand horseman appears the head of one attendant.

b) The fragment of the lower register has the heads of two men preserved.

**206.** Fragment of the right-hand portion of a lead plaque in the shape of an *aedicula* which came to light in 1963, in the area of the *retentura sinistra* of the *castra*. Porţile de Fier Museum, Drobeta-Turnu Severin (Rumania). Measurements: 0.08 × 0.036 m.

*Bibl.* Davidescu-Florescu, *ActaMN*, V (1968), p. 491, fig. 1.

The plaque is identical with two exemplars found at Sucidava and Orlea.

See nos. 42 and 43.

On the four fields are preserved:

a) Bust of Sol and the serpent.

b) Female figure; the right-hand horseman (tunic, cloak, and Phrygian cap) was armed with a spear, above a lamp (or crescent moon?).

c) *Mensa Delphica*: altar, three rings (crowns? loaves?) arranged on a small table and above them three triangular objects (cups?).

d) Cantharus(?); a raven in profile facing right and a bull advancing to the left.

## *ROMVLA-MALVA*

(Reşca, commune Dobrosloveni, distr. Olt., Rumania)

**207.** Fragment of a relief carved in limestone from Vratza (Bulgaria), found in 1970 during the excavations carried out by D. Tudor and Gh. Popilian in the *villa suburbana* near *"the gate of Philippus Arabs"*. Caracal Museum (Rumania). Measurements: 0.098 × 0.075 × 0.010 m.

*Bibl.* unpublished.

The fragment is from the bottom left-hand corner of a tablet.

a) Of the principal field there survives on the right the man prostrate under the horse's hooves.

b) In the bottom register it is possible to distinguish: the goddess Nemesis and the scene of the symbolic death (*occultatio*), consisting of two men standing and holding the ram's skin before a third man, kneeling.

The left-hand corner of the register is missing.

### *SVCIDAVA*

(Celei-Corabia, distr. Olt, Rumania)

**208.** Lead plaque in the shape of an *aedicula* found in 1970, during the excavations carried out in the Romano-Byzantine city by D. Tudor. Corabia Museum (Rumania). Measurements: 0.087 × 0.075 × 0.004 m.

*Bibl.* unpublished.

The plaque is identical with nos. 137, 138, 169, and 170.

The plaque is topped by a curved pediment and an acroterion at each corner, with a rectangular cabled border framing the figures. In the middle of the pediment is a hole.

For remaining description see no. 137.

## 3. MOESIA SVPERIOR

### *HORREVM MARGI*: *Cuprija*

(distr. Cuprija-Jugoslavia)

**209.** Rectangular lead plaque, identical with no. 133. Vojni Museum, Belgrade.

*Bibl.* Piletić, *Vest. Voj. Mus.*, 15 (1969), p. 30, fig. 36 (undescribed and wrongly identified as "bas-relief of the God Mithras"!).

See no. 133.

### *Exact provenance unknown*

**210.** Poorly preserved rectangular lead plaque with the lower portion missing, found in the "Donautal". Belgrade Museum, inv. II/1562. Measurements: 0.070 × 0.061 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 65, no. 1, pl. V/2 (undescribed!).

The following description is based on Janošić, pl. IV/2.

The plaque has the appearance of an *aedicula*, with a triangular pediment supported at the sides by two small columns, the upper part of which is spiral.

a) In the top corners above the pediment, two flying *Victoriae* survive; before their faces are two stars.

b) Within the tympanum the busts of Sol and Luna face one another, with an eagle(?) in the middle.

c) In the principal field the figure of the Goddess is preserved in the centre, with two supporting horsemen holding out their hands (double axe?). The Goddess's head is flanked by two stars.

d) To the right of the bottom register are preserved an animal (cock?), a crater, and a round indistinct object.

e) The bottom of the plaque is completely corroded and not a single item can be distinguished.

**211.** Two fragments of a rectangular lead plaque identical with no. 135. Belgrade Museum (Inv. no. 1557/II). Measurements: 0.094 × 0.098 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 64, no. 2, pl. V/2.

See no. 135.

## 4. PANNONIA INFERIOR

### *AQVINCVM*: *Obud*
### (Budapest III, Hungary)

**212.** Fragment of the top right portion of a lead roundel found in 1930, in *canabae* of Aquincum (Vihár Street), which was lost during the last war. The piece was identical with no. 120.

*Bibl.* Nagy, *Gesch. Stadt Budapest*, I, 1941, p. 431, and *ActaA*, 22 (1970), p. 447, and note 13.

See no. 120.

### *FOSSAE*: *Jarak*
### (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**213.** Lead roundel found in 1965 in the "Iarčina" area, identical with no. 162. Novi Sad-Vojvodina Museum. Diameter 0.068 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 65, no. 7, pl. VI/4.

See no. 162.

### *IDIMINIVM*: *Vojka*(?)
### (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**214.** Lead plaque found in the "Beglučka" area, identical with no. 135. Sremska Mitrovica Museum(?). Measurements: 0.121 × 0.096 × 0.03 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 64, no. 1 (fig. p. 53).

See no. 135.

### *SIRMIVM*: *Sremska Mitrovica*
### (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**215.** Lead plaque found "on 19 August 1970, in sounding 144 a, at the south wall complex in Sremska Mitrovica. It was in a layer of rubbish deposited during the latest period of the Roman city's existence, between two thick walls which formed part of the substructure of the seating arrangement of the hippodrome," The plaque is identical with no. 127.

The upper right-hand corner of the plaque is missing. Sremska Mitrovica Museum. Measurements: 0.078 × 0.075 × 0.003 m.

*Bibl.* Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium,* II, p. 53, no. 4, pl. I/2.

See no. 127.

**216.** Lead roundel found "on 3 July 1963, in square F, 7 of locality 21 at Sremska Mitrovica. Part of the right-hand side and the upper portion of the left-hand side are missing. A large crack has developed in the left-hand side of the roundel."

Sremska Mitrovica Museum (No. 1127). Diameter: 0.07 m.; thickness: 0.002 m.

The monument is identical with no. 162.

*Bibl.* Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium,* II, p. 55, no. 12, pl. LV/8.

See no. 162.

## *Mačvanska Mitrovica*
## (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**217.** Rectangular lead plaque found in 1961, identical with no. 133. The upper left corner is bent upward, horizontally. The lower right corner is bent under, lying against the back of the plaque. Sremska Mitrovica Museum (No. 957). Measurements: 0.94 × 0.079 × 0.0035 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA,* VI (1966), p. 63, no. 16, and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium,* II, p. 53, no. 6, pl. II/4.

See no. 133.

**218.** Rectangular lead plaque, found in 1961, identical with no. 133. A small area above the central part of the arch, and a part of the lower right corner are missing. Sremska Mitrovica Museum (no. 454). Measurements: 0.092 × 0.077 × 0.0027 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA,* VI (1966), p. 63, no. 16, and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium,* II, p. 53, no. 7, pl. III/5.

See no. 133.

## *Sašinci*
## (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**219.** Rectangular lead plaque, found in 1963 in ancient remains now recognized as a small castellum near Sirmium on the Sirmium to Bassianae road. The plaque is identical with no. 132. Right-hand capital and part of arch and column are missing. The upper part is broken and damaged. Sremska Mitrovica Museum (No. 608). Measurements: 0.094 × 0.076 × 0.003 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA,* VI (1966), p. 62, no. 5, and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium,* II, p. 52, no. 1, pl. I/1.

See no. 132.

## *Suljam*
## (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**220.** Rectangular lead plaque, found in 1965 in ancient remains now recognized as a Roman villa. The monument is identical with no. 133. There is a neatly drilled hole at the top centre, apparently for hanging. A gaping hole has destroyed the upper part of the right-hand figure in the third register. The right edge and bottom of the plaque are also damaged. Sremska Mitrovica Museum (no. 419). Measurements: 0.092 × 0.073 × 0.003 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 17, and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium*, II, p. 53, no. 5, pl. II/3.

See no. 133.

## *Prhovo*
## (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**221.** Fragment of lead plaque in the form of an *aedicula*, identical with no. 125, found in 1964. A large, triangular section of the bottom portion of the plaque is missing. The break runs in a diagonal line from the middle of the second register on the left-hand side to just above the lower right corner. Sremska Mitrovica Museum (No. 455). Measurements: 0.079 × 0.082 × 0.002 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 64, no. 3, and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium*, II, p. 54, no. 8.

See no. 125.

**222.** Lead roundel found in 1964 and identical with no. 162. The top of the plaque is badly damaged down to just below the circular border. There are several cracks on the surface. Sremska Mitrovica Museum (No. 456). Diameter: 0.070 m.; thickness: 0.002 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 65, no. 6 and note 8; Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium*, II, p. 55, no. 11, pl. IV/7.

See no. 162.

### *Vizič*
### (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**223.** Rectangular lead plaque found in 1957 (" bei der Reinigung eines Feldkanals südlich vom Dorfe"). The monument is identical with no. 133. Collection A. Dorn in Vukovar (Jugoslavia). Measurements: 0.092 × 0.078 × 0.003 m.

*Bibl.* A. Dorn, *Značajni Arch. Nalazi*, pp. 33-35, and Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 14, pl. I/2.

See no. 133.

### *Exact provenance unknown* (Jugoslavia)

**224.** Fragment of lead plaque identical with no. 135. The lower part of the plaque is missing. Belgrade Museum (inv. 1557/II). Measurements: 0.098 × 0.094 m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 64, no. 2, pl. V/2.

See no. 135.

**225.** MVRSA? Rectangular lead plaque much corroded and identical with no. 132. Slavonian Museum in Osijek (discovered 1895?). Measurements: 0.095 × 0.077 .m.

*Bibl.* Janošić, *OA*, VI (1966), p. 63, no. 10, pl. III/1.

See no. 132.

**226-227.** Nagy, *ActaA*, 22 (1970), p. 447: ".. wir noch zwei weitere bisher nicht veröffentlichte pannonische Denkmäler des donauländischen Reitergottes kennen. Von diesem wurde die Publikation zweier Stücke, einer Bleitafel von 'pannonischem' Typus, und eines fragmentarischen Marmor-Reliefs, im Manuskript schon vorbereitet."

## 5. EXACT PROVENANCE UNKNOWN

**228.** Engraved jasper gem, at one time in the collection Guardabassi. Now Etrusco-Roman Museum, Perugia (Italy). Measurements: 0.040 × 0.035 m.

*Bibl.* Giglioli, *ArchClas*, III, 2, 1951, p. 200, pl. XLIX, 2.

The gem is engraved on both faces (A-B).

A. Design in the form of a temple, seen front face, with triangular pediment supported by two Tuscan columns (the right-hand column missing). At either corner of the pediment is an acroterion.

Face A:

a) Above the pediment an eagle in profile faces right. Around the pediment, from left to right, are visible: three interspersed stars, the bust of Luna with the points of the crescent moon projecting beyond her shoulders, a whip, Victoria crown in hand, and the bust of Sol(missing). In the tympanum of the pediment are one star and the cock in profile facing left.

b) In the principal field is a woman dressed in chiton, himation, and girdle, holding her hands out under the muzzles of two horses in supporting position, each with a Rider wearing cloak, tunic, and Phrygian cap. Each Rider bears a *draco*. Beneath the feet of the right-hand horse a naked man lies prostrate, face downward, with arms outstretched. The left-hand Rider is accompanied by a lion. Below the feet of the central woman is a dagger. Behind the two horsemen are two women each putting a hand to her lips (Nemesis). Above the heads of the horses are two stars.

c) In the bottom register there are, from left to right: a ram's head, a cock, a three-legged candelabrum, four rings each with an internal cross (loaves?), a three-legged table with a fish on it, an amphora, and two indistinct objects.

Face B:

A demonic figure: cock's head, bust wearing cuirass, *balteus*, and flying cloak, feet in form of serpents, holding in the right hand a whip and in the left a shield. Around the demonic figure are the remains of four stars (three are missing).

## 6. LATE ADDITIONS

### *DVROSTORVM*: *Silistra*
### (Bulgaria)

**229.** Fragment from the top right-hand of a white marble roundel, discovered near the border of the Danube in 1970 (Rumanian territory). Călăraşi Museum (Rumania). I am grateful to Nicolaie Conovici for this discovery. Measurements: 0.057 × 0.045 × 0.005 m.

*Bibl.* Unpublished.

All that survives is the upper part of the right-hand horseman wearing a conical cap and raising the left hand to strike, and in front of him a bust of Sol. The relief is completed by painting.

### *ROMVLA-MALVA*: Reşca
### (Commune Dobrosloveni, distr. Olt, Rumania)

**230.** Rectangular lead plaque, with the top left-hand corner missing, discovered in the summer of 1974. Private collection at Reşca. I am grateful to my colleague Dr. Gh. Popilian for this information and the photograph.

*Bibl.* Unpublished.

The plaque is identical with no. 34, discovered at Romula-Malva, but offers some new elements (uncertain in no. 34).

a) The eagle holds a crown in its talon.

b) Under the base joining the two niches is a crater (not a bull's head), in which two small serpents rear up towards it.

d) Above the lion is a seven-rayed star.

e) The first animal is a bull (not a dog!). Above the candelabrum (?) and the ram's head is a club, horizontally placed.

## *SIRMIVM*: *Sremska Mitrovica*

## (Vojv. Sremska Mitrovica-Jugoslavia)

**231.** Rectangular lead plaque, "discovered in a private garden at 22 Jalijska Street outside the city walls of ancient Sirmium". The monument is broken into two pieces. Sremska Mitrovica Museum.

*Bibl.* Edward L. Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium*, III (1973), pp. 81-83, pl. I.

The plaque is identical with nos. 51, 52, 60, 61, 117, 123, 124, 130, 131, 133, 164-166, 186, 209, 217, 218, 220, 223. See no. 133.

The new plaque raises the number of this type to nineteen examples, probably manufactured from the same mould in Sirmium.

## *NOVAE*: Steaklen
## (distr. Sistov, Bulgaria)

**232.** Round-topped marble tablet, Novae Museum. Measurements: 0.180 × 0.160 × 0.022 m. My grateful thanks are due to my colleague Dr. Maria Čičikova for the photograph.

*Bibl.* D. P. Dimitrov, Maria Čičikova, Al. Dimitrova, B. Sultov, V. Buzilova, and I. Vasilčin, "Fouilles archéologiques de 1967-1969 dans le secteur est de Novae", *BIAB*, XXXIV, 1974, pp. 148-149, fig. 13; and Maria Čičikova, "Les fouilles de Novae-Moesia inferior; secteur est: campagnes 1960-1968", in *Roman Frontier Studies 1969. Eight Intern. Congress of "Limesforschung"*, Cardiff 1974, p. 233, pl. 22, c.

a) In the upper right corner of the principal field is the bust of Luna. In the centre is a single horseman, dressed in tunic, flying cloak, and Phrygian cap, raising a double axe in his right hand to strike a man lying on his back on the ground beneath the horse's hooves and being savaged by a lion. Two serpents flank the horseman's head. Behind the horseman stands a woman. In front of the horseman is another woman who holds up in her arms an object shaped like a crescent moon; in the right bottom corner a ram's head lies on a cubic altar.

b) In the bottom register (much damaged) may be distinguished a quadruped running to the right.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY, STATISTICS, TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

## A. SURVEY OF THE MODERN LITERATURE

The monuments of the Danubian Rider-Gods, also called in the past Cabiri, Thracian Riders, or Thraco-Mithraic Riders, did not attract the attention of archaeologists and scholars till the second half of the nineteenth century. A number of circumstances combined to delay the study of these pieces, despite their undeniable interest. First of these was their geographical distribution, among the former Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary), that is to say, in countries where archaeological research was prevented by unfavourable political factors from developing till much later than in the West. Besides that there was the absence of inscriptions, together with the small size of these bas-reliefs and their very puzzling sculptural repertoire, which dissuaded the antiquaries of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment from cataloguing or interpreting them.

All the same, the first steps of this kind were taken as far back as the sixteenth century, when certain antiquarian monks began to take an interest in the gems engraved with an image which they considered as belonging to the abraxas[1] category. It was also quite natural that these gems should have attracted attention by their ornamental character, but their very fewness prevented any attack on the problems of research into the mysterious religion of which they were the emblem. They were attributed at that time to certain magical practices, or else regarded as talismans of some religious sect. Thus it was not till the middle of the past century that the metal or stone reliefs depicting these divinities began to receive the attention they deserved. This attention when it came was on a European scale, owing to the greater and greater numbers in which the scholars of the Danubian states were announcing the excavation and discovery of monuments of the kind.[2]

---

[1] Macarius, *Abraxas*, p. 51 and 89, pl. XI, 45 and XV, 62; Montfaucon, *L'Ant. expl.*, II (2), p. 363, pl. CLVI; Bartoli, *Museum Odeschalcum*, II, p. 71, pl. XXXI and Winckelmann, *Pierres gravées*, p. 27, no. 122. The passion for the study of the engraved gems depicting the Danubian Riders persists right up to the 19th century: cf. Toelken, *Vertiefgeschnitt. Steine*, III, p. 114, no. 239; Lajard, *Culte de Venus*, pl. XIV, G, 3; Gerhard, *AZ*, VII (1849) p. 60, pl. VI, 9; XII (1854), p. 210, pl. LXV, 3; King, *The Gnostics*, p. 136; King, *Antique Gems*, p. 359; King, *Antique Gems and Rings*, pl. IX, 5; Sacken and Kenner, *Sammlung Cab. Wien*, p. 432, no. 167; Tocilescu, *Dacia*, p. 337, no. 354; Hülsen, *MdI*, 1888, p. 315, no. 1 and Furtwängler, *Geschnitt. Steine im Antiq. Berlin*, p. 335, no. 9468.

The mysterious character of the engraved plaques of the image of the Danubian Rider ensured that the discussions and opinions formulated by nineteenth century scholars were little more than vague, hastily formulated hypotheses. There was no research into the archaeological and cultic analogies suggested by the monuments of other local contemporary religions, despite the evidence of reciprocal influences in the monumental sculpture of the locality. One serious lack was that of a critical catalogue of the monuments, exactly described and illustrated by photographs or drawings of good quality. The greater part of the relevant bas-reliefs were inaccessible to scholars, because they were only published in reviews and books appearing in the various national languages — Rumanian, Serbo-Croat, Hungarian, Bulgarian—with which the wider world of scholarship was very little acquainted.

A first critical monograph, accompanied by a *corpus* of monuments almost complete for its time (24 pieces in all), is due to

---

[2] Háliczky, *Tudományos Gyüjtemény* III (1817), p. 64; *Cimeliot. Mus. Nat. Hungarici*, p. 137, nos. 6 and 7; Henzen, *BInst.*, I (1848), p. 164; *Mon. Ist.*, IV, pl. 38, 1; Neigebaur, *Dacien*, p. 208, nos. 54-57; Lajard, *Culte du cyprès*, pl. VII, 6; Kukuljević and Sakcinski, *Archiv. za Povest. Jugoslav* III (1854), p. 345, pl. I, 1; Lenormant, *RA* I (1875), p. 50; Hampel, *ArchKözl* (1878), p. 136, no. 1; Brunšmid, *AEMÖ* III (1879) p. 123, no. 2; Brunšmid, *Vjesnik*, 1902, p. 142; Kubitschek and Loewy, *AEMÖ* III (1879), p. 171, nos. 7 and 8; Tocilescu, *Dacia*, pp. 336 and 695; Michaelis, *Ancient Marbles*, p. 292, n. 42; Melhárd, *Somogy. Rég.*, 1879/80, p. 31; Bojničić, *Kroat. Rev.* III (1880), p. 145; Schneider, *AEMÖ* XI (1887), p. 14, nos. 2 and 3; Pichler, *Virunum*, p. 180, pl. 2; *Kunstop. Kärten*, p. 465; Nowotny, *Glasnik BH*, 1890, p. 98 and 1894, p. 201; Nowotny, *WMBH* IV (1896), p. 296; Ohnefaltsch-Richter, *Kypros*, p. 442, pl. CXXII, 9; Reizner, *AÉrt* XIX, 1899, p. 188; Téglás, *AÉrt* IX (1890), p. 359 and XXVIII (1908), p. 82, etc.

Teohari Antonescu, professor of archaeology at the University of Iassy (Rumania).[3] It was compiled by Antonescu as a degree thesis submitted to the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest, on the advice of his two supervisors, the archaeologists Al. I. Odobescu and Gr. G. Tocilescu. A good part of the published monuments, and some of his conclusions, had been supplied to him by Odobescu personally, who many years before had launched an appeal for the compilation of just such a monograph.[4]

Following the theory of E. Gerhard published in 1854,[5] Antonescu identified the two Riders of the Danubian plaques with the Cabiro-Dioscuran pair, and it was in the light of the known data about these that he studied the distribution of his Rider-Gods over the ancient world. The Rumanian scholar thought the cult of the Cabiri of Samothrace had entered Dacia before the Roman conquest (A. D. 106); that north of the Danube it had fused with the Zalmoxis religion, from which it borrowed the grotto sanctuary and ended by assuming sculptural form as a result of the *interpretatio Romana.*[6] While accepting the idea of a slender Mithraic influence in the sculptural repertoire of these plaques, Antonescu remained convinced that the myth and the dogma of the Danubian Riders originated in the legend of the Cabiri. For that reason he made long excursions into the cults of the Cabiri and of the Dioscuri, looking for religious and sculptural affinities, to which he devoted many enthusiastic but unprofitable pages. His attempts to establish certain relations of content between the Danubian Rider-God monuments and those of the Cabiro-Dioscuri achieved nothing, for lack of really convincing arguments. Caught at his own game, he becomes involved in contradictions or proposes different interpretations of one and the same theme, as in the case of "the woman putting her hand to her mouth", who in one of his interpretations is said to represent the goddess Nemesis while in another she becomes no more than a humble vestal, an acolyte of the cult.[7] Finally, after noticing that of the 24 "Danubian Cabiri" known in 1889 15 had been discovered in Dacian territory,[8] Antonescu offers a hypothesis which was long unknown to the specialists, namely that we here have a religion properly so called, but attested only from the moment when the Romans provided it with a sculptural form, since the Dacians themselves had no tradition of sculptured religious images.[9]

---

[3] Teohari Antonescu, *Cultul Cabirilor în Dacia, Studiu arheologic şi mythologic asupra unor monumente antice, în parte inedite şi descoperite în regiunile Istrului*, Bucureşti, 1889; IX + 260 pp. and XII pl. with 18 fig.

[4] A letter sent to the Hungarian archaeologist F. Rómer, cf. *AÉrt* III (1869), p. 129.

[5] Gerhard, *AZ* III (1854), p. 210ff.

[6] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, pp. 58 and 80.

A point to be made in favour of Antonescu's monograph is the scrupulousness with which he has assembled his documentary material and his meticulous study of certain images which had been defaced or were in bad condition or had been badly drawn by earlier publishers of Danubian plaques. Such care was especially meritorious in a young man submitting his degree thesis. His work is accompanied by 12 plates with 21 lithograph figures in the technique of the day, that is in colour, which gives rise to a number of imprecisions and various interpretations. This is particularly unfortunate because some extremely interesting monuments used by Antonescu have since disappeared, and are preserved only in his illustrations and descriptions (43, 45, 48).

Despite these failings the work remains of great importance as the first monograph devoted to the monuments of these obscure divinities. Its value is increased by the fact that Antonescu did not make the mistake of some later editors and introduce alien monuments into his catalogue (Thracian Rider, Cabiri, Dioscuri, etc.). At the same time, his monograph provoked the publication in different countries of further unpublished monuments of the same type,[10] the authors of which felt obliged to base their own opinions on the theories of Antonescu.

Towards the end of last century important contributions to the knowledge of this strange religion were made by Franz Cumont[11] and E. Nowotny.[12] In publishing a fragmentary relief which he had seen at Galați (100), Cumont declares it to be concerned with some vague deities connected with the religion of the Thracians. He at the same time detects in it strong influences of Mithraic myth and mysteries, shown in the borrowing of the crater group flanked by a lion and a snake. The Belgian scholar does, however, conclude that these religious representations are not to be confused with those inspired by the Iranian god since they belong to a cult with its own peculiar development.

---

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[8] The small bronze statuette published by Antonescu, *op. cit.*, p. 28, pl. XII, 8 was a fake; cf. Hampel, *AÉrt* XXIII (1903), p. 363.

[9] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 80; an opinion accepted also by: Henzen, *BIst* I (1848), p. 164ff.; Hülsen, *MdI* III (1888), p. 317, n. 1 and Hampel, *AÉrt* XXXII (1912), p. 339—who sees a powerful Mithraic influence in the Danubian Rider cult.

[10] See Notes 1 and 2 above. Cf. also S. Reinach, *RA*, 1895, 313, no. 67bis; Haugh, *AÉrt* XXII (1902), p. 364 and C. Patsch, *WMBH* IX (1894), p. 230.

As for Nowotny, he supports the opinions of Antonescu, identifying the two Riders of the Danubian plaques with the Cabiri, or else the Dioscuri, and the goddess in the middle with Demeter. He cites in evidence of this identification the tripod with the *pompilus* or pilot-fish, familiar in the myth of the deities of Samothrace. The composition of the figurative repertoire of the Danubian plaques reveals a complicated syncretism, made up of borrowings from different Graeco-Roman, oriental, and of course barbaric cults. According to the Austrian scholar, Mithraic influence is widely attested in them—the emblems of the Four Elements, the sun and moon deities, the group about the crater, etc. By analogy with the Mithraic reliefs, Nowotny goes so far as to specify two degrees of initiation in the mysteries of this new cult, one marked by the goddess with her hand to her lips (Nemesis), the other by the image of the soldier who accompanies the Riders (Mars).

Another assiduous investigator of this religion after Antonescu was the Hungarian scholar Josef Hampel, whose great merit it is to have added 60 other monuments to the *Corpus* of the Rumanian professor.[13] Unfortunately a good number of the pieces catalogued by Hampel do not belong to the category of Danubian Rider-God monuments, but to that of the Thracian Rider, or other equestrian divinities. The interpretative study of the Danubian plaques, however, is only of secondary interest for Hampel. His point of view does not much differ from that of his predecessors, Gerhard, Antonescu, and Nowotny. We note also that his catalogue contains a number of gaps and that his descriptions in Hungarian are not accompanied by the usual summary in a language of wider European diffusion. Moreover, many of his descriptions are compiled in an erroneous fashion, without that regard for method so necessary in the study of elements of some religious import. The frequent absence of data such as the place of discovery of the monument concerned, its dimensions, complete bibliographical references etc. and so on, means that the material assembled by Hampel must be closely scrutinised. What is more, many of his plates are lacking in clarity, so that certain details cannot be grasped with sufficient precision. But the great criticism to be made of Hampel's *Corpus* is the lack of discernment with which he has carelessly included in his studies monuments alien to the Danubian Riders. Without any regard to actual differences, for instance, he has inserted in his catalogue representations of the Thracian Rider, of the Dioscuri, or of certain other Romanian divinities (as in the case of the first nine *ex-voto* offerings, among others) who have nothing to do with the Danubian Rider cult.[14]

---

[11] Cumont, *BATH*, 1896, p. II, pl. III, and *MMM* II, p. 526, no. 328bis.

[12] Nowotny, *WMBH* IV (1896), p. 296.

[13] Hampel, *AÉrt* XXIII (1903), pp. 305-365; XXV (1905), pp. 1-16 and 116-124; XXXI (1911), pp. 409-425; XXXII (1912), pp. 330-352 and *BpRég* VIII (1904), pp. 5-47.

Thanks to an interesting article by J. Ziehen,[15] certain conclusions of Hampel's first study (published in Hungarian) have been made known to the international scientific world. In pointing out a series of contradictions in the work of the Hungarian archaeologist, Ziehen offers some valuable hypotheses of his own, later to be confirmed by other specialists.

Little by little, at the beginning of this century, the number of monuments dedicated to the Danubian Riders increased as a result of discoveries made in Pannonia,[16] Upper Moesia,[17] and Lower

---

[14] Hampel, *AÉrt* XXIII (1903), p. 305f.

[15] Ziehen, *AA* XIX (1904), col. 11-17, cf. B. Kohlbach, *Berl. philol. Wochenschrift*, fasc. 39 (1904), pp. 1229-1230.

[16] Hoffiller, *Vjesnik* VIII (1905), pp. 119-128 and 204-207; Hoffiller, *AÉrt* XXVI (1906), p. 40; Groller, *RLÖ* VII (1906), p. 82, fig. 46; Darnay, *AÉrt* XXXI (1911), p. 319; Supka, *AA* XXX (1915), p. 37, fig. 15.

[17] Vulić, *ÖJh* VIII (1905), col. 130, no. 45 = *Spomenik* XLII (1950), p. 91.

Moesia.[18] During the interval religious elements not previously noticed had been appearing in newly published Danubian Rider plaques and attracting the attention of investigators. One contribution worthy of record inspired by these new discoveries was that of G. I. Kazarow.[19] This author proposed a different hypothesis about the birthplace of the religion concerned. He categorically denied the possibility of its having first appeared on Thracian territory since in the rest of Thrace, south of the Balkans, only two discoveries of this kind (104, 105) were known in his day (as indeed in our own). Without contesting the links between the cult of the Danubian Riders and that of the Thracian Rider, he considered them much less important than the features due to Mithraic influence. All things considered, for Kazarow the two Danubian Rider-Gods had no connection with the Cabiri and were the expression of a syncretist local cult.

An important date in the history of the investigations of this cult was that of the publication of the monuments of Poetovio by M. Abramić.[20] This Croatian scholar also gave his support to the hypothesis identifying the Danubian Riders with the Cabiro-Dioscuri, and claimed to recognize on one of the Danubian monuments (147 b) the symbolic hammer of the gods of Samothrace. It is to Abramić that the merit is due of being the first to supply an explanation of the symbolic death (*occultatio*) on the Danubian plaques.

The numerous studies of M. Rostovtseff[21] furnish a totally different point of view about this cult. No connection, for him, with the Cabiri. What we have, rather, is a syncretistic Thraco-Iranian cult, originating in Mithraic solar beliefs. In conclusion of a long series of arguments, the Russian scholar reconstructs the history of this religion as follows. Starting in the Iranian regions of the Black Sea coast, it became a cult of the "God of Light", who combatted the primary destructive forces of Nature. Reaching the north of the Black Sea in the period of Scythian domination, it mingled with a cult of the Great Goddess and managed to survive the religious reformation of Zoroaster. A mystic ritual emerged from it on the northern coasts of the Black Sea—the holy communion of the god (a single god) with the Goddess.[22] First the Scythians, and after them the Sarmatians spread this cult to the banks of the Danube, from where it was diffused in Asia Minor. In this region he supposes that it came under various Hittite and Anatolian influences, with later some slight borrowings from the cult of the Cabiri. It was the contacts with these religions which gave rise to the mysteries connected with the Danubian Rider cult. According to Rostovtseff, the last influences to which it was exposed were those of the Mithras religion and the cult of the Thracian Rider.[23] In this syncretic form it was to spread as far as China and India.[24] As for the relation between the Danubian Rider plaques and the bas-reliefs of the Thracian Rider, Rostovtseff will accept no more than the idea of an exchange of artistic elements, considering them as two distinct religions. The Thracian Rider was worshipped by Thracian peasants, farm-workers, shepherds, and huntsmen, without his being for that reason a solar deity. The Danubian Riders, in complete contrast, were worshipped particularly by the soldiers living in the garrisons of the Roman Danubian provinces. Their religious roots and the

---

[18] Škorpil, *Aboba-Pliska*, pl. CIII, 5; Dobrusky, *Izvestia Muzei* I (1907), 140, nos. 197-202; Filow, *AA* XXVI (1911), p. 366, fig. 10 = *BSAB* II (1911), p. 275, fig. 8.

[19] Kazarow, *AEW* XV (1912), p. 153, pl. I; *Heros* (*Thrak. Reiter*), *PWRE*, Suppl. III, col. 1148; *AA*, 1902, col. 196; *BIAB* I (1921/22), pp. 137-145; *ABMP*, 1923, p. 197, no. 1; *ÖJh* XXIV (1929), p. 130, no. 2, fig. 48; *Godišnik-Sofia* V (1926/31), p. 152, no. 2, fig. 64.

[20] Abramić, *ÖJh* XVII (1914), Beibl. col. 94 and 144. F. Kern s.v. *Kabeiros*, *PWRE* X/2, col. 1448 disputes the identity of the Cabiri with the Danubian Riders and does not accept several of Abramić' hypotheses.

[21] Rostovtseff (Rostowtzew), *Bull. Commis. arch. Russie* 49 (1913), pp. 1-62 and 133-140, pl. VI-VII; *Iranism and Ionism in South Russia*, Petersburg 1913, p. 6; *RÉG* XXXII (1919), p. 480; *Sem. Kondacovianum* II, p. 141 and *Storia economica e sociale dell'Impero Romano*, Firenze, 1933 (trad. G. Sanna), p. 534, n. 36. His most important conclusions were set out in the Memoir: *Une tablette votive thraco-mythriaque du Louvre*, published in the

---

*Mémoires prés. div. savants Acad. Inscr. et Belles Lettres* XIII, 2 (1923) pp. 1-31 (= pp. 385-415) VI pl. and 24 fig. (quoted by me: *Tablette du Louvre*, pp. 1-31).

[22] The holy communion performed in the manner of the monuments of southern Russia cited by Rostovtseff has only one single analogy in the catalogue of Danubian tablets (45). But for this sole piece of evidence we today possess only Antonescu's drawing which is dubious.

[23] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 21ff.

[24] Rostovtseff, *Sem. Kondacov.*, p. 1.

figurative elements of their sculptural representations were oriental. They were warrior deities, triumphing over evil.[25] Even if, after all, the Danubian plaques were found to represent a late version of the cult of the Cabiri, their essence remains entirely overlaid by a thick covering of Iranian and oriental influences.[26]

In his voluminous treatise on the symbolic significance of the fish in pagan religions and also in Chistianity, the German scholar F. J. Dölger[27] too has touched on some aspects of the Danubian Rider-cult. But he of course was concerned above all with the religious role of the fish in this cult. The two Rider-Gods themselves are identified by Dölger too with the Cabiri. He seeks at the same time to identify the third Cabirus with Sabazius-Dionysus, and in support of this hypothesis adduces the presence of the snake and the human skull in the hand of one of the attendants[28] (45 b; 46; 174 a). For the central goddess, finally, he suggests an identification with Atargatis, the associate of the Cabiro-Dioscuri.[29]

During the inter-war period Arpad Buday, ex-professor of the University of Szeged (Hungary) attempted to produce a new catalogue of the Danubian Rider monuments and to draw up a regular series of conclusions about their cult.[30] In reading his long studies we realize at once that his efforts are doomed to failure. Their results are greatly inferior, from a scholarly and technical point of view, to the work of his predecessors. Buday in fact reaches some strange conclusions, based on an analysis of the sculptures which I shall discuss later in its proper place. Unfortunately for him he was ignorant of the greater part of the literature of the subject, among others the substantial survey presented three years earlier by Rostovtseff to the Académie des Inscriptions in Paris. Buday has refurbished the material collected by Hampel, reproducing Hampel's none too satisfactory illustrations, together with many descriptions of the Danubian plaques which are incomplete, mistaken, or much too personal. He often attaches too much importance to a dubious illustration of a piece which has since disappeared—the engraved gem (191), for instance—diverging into arguments absolutely unacceptable in terms of scholarship. But his greatest mistake lies in having confused the reliefs of the Thracian Rider with those in which only one of the Danubian Riders appears, or the monuments of real Cabiri or Dioscuri with Danubian plaques showing the two Riders. On the strength of his catalogue, as here reviewed, Buday passes to a classification of these monuments, as erroneous as it is complicated, and seeks to convince us that we have to do with a cult originating as early as the third century B. C. Firmly convinced that he has found the definitive solution of this controversial problem, Buday concludes (in heavy type): "Our monuments in their most complete form are the monuments of a religion of redemption through mysteries. The mediating divinities of this religion of redemption are the Cabiri fused with the Dioscuri, whose father was Sol, the sun god." He proposes in consequence that these votive objects should henceforward be designated "monuments of the mysteries of the Dioscuro-Cabiri."[31]

---

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 14ff.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 16. Il est d'accord avec Kazarow *ARW* XV (1912), p. 160 et avec G. Seure, *RÉA*, 1912, p. 243, n. 4.

[27] F. I. Dölger, *IXΘYC. Der heilige Fisch in den antiken Religionen und im Christentum*, 4 vol. Münster im West., 1920-1928 and *Antike und Christentum* IV (1933), p. 62f., pl. 2.

[28] Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 145 and II, p. 432. The hypothesis regarding the identification of the third Cabirus killed by his two brothers, a myth indicated by the presence of the skull carried by an attendant, was formulated for the first time by Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 62. But this object, part of the repertoire of a bronze relief found in Lower Dacia (46), is dubious. The influences of Sabazius on the Danubian Riders were formulated for the first time by Lenormant, *RA*, 1875, p. 50, and accepted by Cook, *Zeus* II, p. 664. R. Eisler, in *Die orphisch-dionysischen Mysteriengedanken in der Christlichen Antike*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1925, p. 325ff., sought to identify Dionysian elements in the reliefs of the Danubian plaques. In his opinion the slain Cabirus suffered the same fate as Dionysus, who also was killed by the Titans. Eisler considers that the ram's mask, the banquet, the lion, and the numerous liturgical objects to be seen on the Danubian Rider reliefs are Dionysian elements found also in the Mithras cult.

[29] Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 150.

---

[30] A series of studies published in Hungarian, with German summaries, in the review Dolgozatok II (1926), pp. 1-71; III (1927), pp. 130-140; IV (1928), pp. 1-147; V (1929), pp. 1-26 and VI (1930), pp. 1-48. See the severe criticisms, partly justified, by: A. Hekler, *AÉrt*, 1923/26, pp. 260-262; G. Seure, *Rev. de Philologie* LIV (1928), p. 130ff.; *Századok*, 1930, p. 799; *AÉrt*, 1931, p. 274; Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, *passim*; Tudor, *ED* VII (1937), p. 195; Giglioli, *ArchClas* III (1951), p. 200ff.

One of the great historians of pre-Roman Dacia, Vasile Pârvan, has also concerned himself in passing with the problem of the origin of the Danubian Rider-cult. In contrast to Rostovtseff, the Rumanian scholar sought to rediscover in the framework of this cult those ancient Indo-European deities the Asvins, the Morning Star and the Evening Star, traversing the ways of heaven in order to save seamen from shipwreck. By syncretism he thinks they have become transformed into celestial deities, while the supreme god of the twins was the god of the thunderbolt and the double axe, that is to say Zalmoxis.[32]

A Russian investigator, V. Gorobkov, has sought to isolate in Russian religious art iconographical elements going back to the Danubian plaques, influences which he thinks might have been transmitted through the Dacio-Sarmatian world.[33] I cannot claim a direct acquaintance with Gorobkov's work, of which I only know fragments quoted by other authors. But it seems to me that a transmission going back so far and in a region where the Danubian plaques were unknown in antiquity cannot be sustained.

About forty years ago F. Saxl made a study of the artistic elements of the Danubian plaques by reference to those identified in the repertoire of the Mithraic sculptures, a problem which had previously been touched on by Cumont and certain other scholars. The parallelism noted by Saxl between the two series of representations proves without a shadow of doubt the iconographic connections between the two religions and, implicitly, a certain exchange of beliefs, rituals, etc.[34]

On the relations between the Danubian Rider-cult and that of the Dioscuri, F. Chapouthier has made an important contribution.[35]

---

[31] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 146ff.

[32] Pârvan, *Getica*, p. 521.

[33] V. Gorobkov, in *Trudy Goszudar. Ist. Muz.*, 1926, pp. 7-36 (ap. Buday). A study which remains inaccessible to me, too, is that of Rîbakov, *Drevnie elementîi v russcom narodnom tvorcestve*, in *Sovietskaja Etnografia* I (1948), p. 92ff.

[34] Saxl, *Mithras*, pp. 20, 36ff.

[35] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 286ff.

According to him the cult has not been fully appreciated by the specialists and cannot in any instance be confounded with that offered to the Cabiri or the Dioscuri (a mistake made by Buday in particular).[36] Evidently there are iconographic elements common to the two groups of sculptures—the stars, the crescent moon above the central group, the double axe, the Phrygian cap, etc. None the less, these elements common to the Danubian plaques and the Aegean reliefs are not enough to prove an identity between the two religions. The absence in the Aegean of the fallen men trampled by the horses' hooves is serious evidence of the difference between them.[37] But Chapouthier's most important contribution, the best founded and most conclusive (to which I gave my support as long as thirtyfive years ago), is his demonstration that the Danubian Rider monuments are indebted for a whole series of iconographic sculptural elements to the artistic repertoire of the Dioscuri, themselves divinities much earlier than the Danubian plaques. It is this series to which the "Danubian triad" also belongs.[38] On the other hand, the French scholar's attempt to defend the view that neither the sculptural repertoire nor the cult of the Danubian Riders had ever been subject to Mithraic influences cannot be sustained. It is enough in this respect to recall the presence on the Danubian tablets of the group consisting of the crater flanked by the lion and snake, of the busts of the Seasons and the Winds, of Sol, of Luna, etc., all done in the Mithraic manner.

Other contributions, of less importance, have been made too in support of one or other of the opinions outlined above, by the following scholars: F. Kern,[39] W. Kubitschek,[40] G. Seure,[41] K. Skorpil,[42]

---

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 256, n. 1. He does not accept the theory of the cult's origin in the third century B.C. proposed by Buday, cf. Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

[37] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 290.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

[39] Kern, *PWRE* X, 2, col. 1449: a Mithraic cult!

[40] Kubitschek, *Römerfunde von Eisenstadt*, p. 101.

[41] Seure, *RÉA*, 1924, p. 62 = *Starinar*, 1923, p. 287.

[42] Škorpil, *Materiali Aboba Pliska*, *passim*, and *Antiquity of Black Sea* II, pp. 86 et 112.

G. Lugli,[43] Alexander Christine,[44] N. Vulić,[45] V. Hoffiller,[46] and D. Tudor.[47]

During the years 1935-1937 the author of the present work was able to publish a new *corpus* of the Danubian Rider-Gods, accompanied by an interpretative essay.[48] In this I was obliged to increase the number of known monuments, from the 72 listed by Hampel, to 134, and filled in the descriptive lacunae of the older lists, due to Antonescu, Hampel, and Buday. At the same time I tried to supply good photographic illustrations and clear drawings, and to make sure that the descriptions of the monuments should be accurate, avoiding any too personal opinions in cases of editorial uncertainty. In most examples I examined these 134 monuments in the different museums of the Danubian countries and was thus able to correct a number of errors passed down from previous editors. The lack of technical skill of certain provincial craftsmen called in to depict these religious monuments, and possibly also the bad state of preservation of a good number of these pieces, meant that certain elements and points of detail could not be understood except by analogy with those in intact pieces. In fact no two editors have given an identical description of one and the same monument.[49] For this reason I refrained (both in my *Corpus* of 39 years ago and in that of 1969) from indicating the different errors which had crept into the older descriptions in those cases where, from the present state of our knowledge, there was not the least doubt of the interpretation. In view of the fact that the Danubian Rider monuments are at the present moment still the most puzzling and complicated representations in the whole of ancient religious iconography, I felt it necessary to supply their investigators with the most detailed possible descriptions. Wherever for different reasons (bad state of preservation, disappearance of the original, etc.) the reading of the sculptures proved doubtful, I put the emphasis on their analogies with other similar or identical (in the case of metal) monuments coming from the neighbourhood of the same provincial workshops. As for the lost reliefs, I was obliged to reproduce the drawings and photographs, together with the descriptions of the older editors, without omitting a single piece, so that my *Corpus* might be complete, and thus spare the investigators the labour of searching various publications, of difficult access owing to their rarity or language of publication. But I observed all necessary caution in formulating hypotheses or conclusions regarding the lost material or that which had not been edited with sufficient care.

---

[43] Lugli, *Forma Italiae* I, 1, p. 112, no. 36.

[44] Alex. Christine, *Bull. Metrop. Mus.*, 1931, p. 148.

[45] Vulić, *Spomenik*, 1931, p. 230, no. 63 and 1933, p. 54, no. 171.

[46] Hoffiller, *Vjesnik*, 1935, p. 61ff.

[47] Tudor, *AISC* II (1933/5), p. 181 and *AnDobr* XVII (1936), pp. 51-54.

[48] Tudor, "I Cavalieri danubieni", *ED* VII (1937), pp. 189-356 and "Nuove rappresentazioni dei Cavalieri danubiani", *ED* (1938), pp. 445-449 (Doctoral Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest, 1936). See also the reviews by F. Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 67f.; *BIAB* XI (1937), p. 358; Chapouthier, *RÉA* XLI (1939), p. 65f.; R. Vulpe, *Bul. Asoc. Acad. "V. Pârvan"* XI (1938), p. 8; A. Alföldi, *Bibliogr. Pannonica* IV (1938), p. 33f. and *Folia Arch.* III-IV, p. 16; Vulpe, *Douăzeci de ani de activitate a Scolii Române din Roma*, Bucureşti, 1943, p. 17, L. Buzdugan, *Rev. Ist. Română* X (1940), p. 433f.; B. Hemberg, *Cabiri*, Uppsala, 1950, p. 241, n. 6, ecc.

[49] The most incorrect descriptions of monuments were among those given by Buday. He also embarked on a series of risky hypotheses concerning the nature of the gods and their identity with the Cabiro-Dioscuri. Buday (*DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 101) claims to identify on a medallion (27, b) the waves of the sea over which the Dioscuri are riding to save shipwrecked mariners. But what we have in fact below the horses are two snakes accompanying

For the exactness of the technical data and the descriptions I assume full scientific responsibility only in the case of the monuments directly examined by myself or studied from perfectly clear reproductions. Thus it is that my catalogues of 1937-1938 and 1969 have set aside a good number of important technical elements which I had no possibility of studying or verifying from the originals. In the same way certain rare older Hungarian and Yugoslav publications (marked with an asterisk in my bibliographic list) have remained inaccessible to me, since I was unable to find them (in 1935) even in the libraries of the countries concerned.

My studies of the Danubian Rider-Gods, published in 1937-1938, attracted the attention of a number of European scholars, who in

---

the Danubian Riders in their fight (cf. also the monuments 35, c; 38, b; 39, b). On one engraved gem (191, b) he sees Hephaestus with the Cabiri (*ibid.*, p. 141). We observe that this scene is conveyed to us by a quite erroneous drawing.

their turn formed various opinions about this religion or published other monuments, some of which were discovered by them after the appearance of my *Corpus*.

In an extensive review of my monograph, rich in interesting suggestions and in line with his own numerous studies of ancient religion, Franz Cumont[50] asks whether these Danubian plaques really reflect the theology and ritual practised by a definite religious sect or whether they are not to be viewed quite differently. The absence of votive inscriptions addressed to definite divinities even in the form of explicit invocations, the absence of all vestiges of temples dedicated to them (not the least trace has been found archaeologically or epigraphically to this day), the small dimensions of the Danubian plaques, the presence of such peculiar sacred images, the absence of any names of dedicators as would be expected in votive offerings—all these observations led the Belgian scholar to deny these reliefs the character of expressions of an organized religion. With these reserves in mind Cumont thinks them nothing but simple phylacteries, or in other words apotropaic amulets to protect an individual wearer. This function is betrayed above all, he thinks, by the engraved gems and metal medallions. At the same time Cumont also underlined the predominantly magical character of the sculptural repertoire of the respective pieces, their complicated scenario, full of symbols and religious scenes. According to him, their purpose would likewise be explained by their places of discovery—in the interior of houses, deposited in tombs, worn as personal amulets—as being "to avert all danger and ward off ill luck".[51] Another argument in favour of their magical purpose, he thinks, is the fact that the Danubian tablets were made by preference of "Saturn's lead"—the preeminently magical metal, used both for *tabulae devotionis* and for magical figurines. The frequent presence of Nemesis in their pictorial repertoire would be another argument.

Even though phylacteries of this kind bring together elements peculiar to various local or foreign cults (the Thracian Rider, the Dioscuri, Magna Mater, Mithras, etc.) with a mixture of sacred animals, symbolic objects, cult scenes, scenes of sacrifice and initiation, sacred furniture, and so on, they do not, he thinks, show anything which can be cited as evidence of a separate religion. According to Cumont, the assembly of so many disparate elements, far from indicating the existence of a syncretistic religion combining the cults of several different peoples, is evidence only of a magician's desire to increase people's confidence in the talismans he makes, and to attract a clientele believing in the efficacy of the magic virtues with which he can endow them. In conclusion, however, Cumont does recognize that the religious and mystical scenes reproduced by the Danubian tablets are unique of their kind. As we shall see later, his theories have not found a favourable echo among any of the investigators of the Danubian Rider religion.

---

[50] Cumont, "Les Cavaliers danubiens", *RA*, 1938, pp. 67-70. Cfr. also A. Blanchet, *Journal des Savants* 3 (1939), p. 115, n. 1.

[51] Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

Having previously published his own opinions, Fernand Chapouthier, in his review of my work again takes up the question, with new hypotheses and this time accepting my principal conclusions.[52] He considers Dacia as the place of origin of this religion and picks out in the Danubian tablets local Dacian elements, to which from time to time were added other iconographic elements borrowed from foreign cults. These foreign influences are to be detected above all in the "pious imagery" of certain symbols and scenes common to all religions and mysteries. What is more, this time he does admit a certain distinct Mithraic influence in the sculptural repertoire of the Danubian tablets. However, in his opinions this influence should not be exaggerated at the expense of that exercised by the Cabiro-Dioscuran mysteries, which must have been much stronger than hitherto admitted.

The interpretation of the mystical symbols still remains, however, a difficult problem, the solution of which can only be obtained by comparison with similar scenes from related religions, for syncretism was always a source of numerous confusions. Hence Chapouthier's conclusion was that, at the relevant stage reached by the archaeological research of the day, it was scarcely possible to cite other historical data than those presented by the present author.

The diffusion and character of Rider-Gods in general was the object of detailed study in the work of synthesis compiled by J. Wiesner. His conclusions about the Danubian Riders was that they must have been indigenous *heroes* (*"bodenständige Heroen"*), victorious over the forces of evil.[53]

---

[52] Chapouthier, "Les Cavaliers danubiens", *RÉA* XLI (1939), pp. 65-68.

A new set of monuments uncovered from the soil of Lower Moesia (72-78, 80, 82, 86) gave G. I. Kazarow[54] occasion to set forth his opinion of certain new aspects of the Danubian Rider cult. He accepts my conclusions about the interpretation of the scenes reproduced on the lead plaques of the Gabare type (36, 74, 75) but he maintains his view that three of the plaques discovered at Razgrad represent a distant echo of this religion from a time before the appearance of the classical Danubian tablets.[55] So far as concerns the iconography of the single Danubian Rider, he considers that he could only have appeared in the territory of Lower Moesia, because that is where the oldest and most numerous reliefs of the Thracian Rider have been found, and it is these which inspired the makers of the plaques, a circumstance borne out also by the Razgrad finds. In agreement with the Rostovtseff hypothesis,[56] the Sofia professor places the most ancient iconographic indices of this cult in the Scythian art developed north of the Black Sea, from where the "Goddess" and the two "Riders" could have reached the regions of the lower Danube, being carried by the Sarmatians in the course of their migrations. On the other hand, Kazarow does not share the opinion of Cumont in reducing the Danubian Rider monuments to the simple role of amulets. He proves his point by showing that a certain number of the Danubian tablets are undeniably of votive character (1, 71, 62, 79, 147, 155, 157, etc.).[57]

The latest publications of Danubian Rider tablets found in Pannonia still put this province of our own day at the head of the list, as the place where this type has been found most frequently. But of this new set only one example offers a characteristic representation (118), all the others being no more than mere copies cast in lead and reproducing well-known scenes (129, 131, 154, 165, 166, etc.). One of the leading specialists of the Roman archaeology of the Danubian countries, Andreas Alföldi,[58] has also concerned himself, in a series of works appearing since 1937-1938, with this cult. Starting from his well-known theory of the complete annihilation of the Dacian population in the course of the Roman conquest (A.D. 101-106) it was quite natural for the Hungarian scholar to reject the idea of a Dacian origin for a religion originating in the second century of our era. According to him such equestrian divinities could not have originated in a country like Dacia which knew nothing of cavalry. Consequently he adopted the theory of a Scythian origin for the divine triad (that is to say Rostovtseff's theory). Through the medium of certain south Thracian influences he supposes that the Danubian Riders entered Dacia, where they underwent a radical syncretistic remodelling process. The route traversed by this cult in reaching Dacia from Thrace can be traced, according to Alföldi, by the metal tablets found at Galice and Razgrad, south of the Danube.

---

[53] J. Wiesner, *ARW* 37 (1941), p. 42f.; cf. A. Alföldi, *FoliaArch.*, III-IV, 1941, p. 1f.

[54] Kazarow, *AA*, 1938, col. 196f.; *ARW* XXXVI (1939) p. 161ff.; *AnzÖAK*, 1940, p. 25f.; *Pisciculi*, p. 146f. For the new finds made in Bulgaria, see also: A. Frova, *BINASA* XI (1948), p. 33f. and *Studi Mistrorigo*, p. 8f. Frova accepts Cumont's views, considers Lower Moesia as the region where the cult appeared, and the Danubian tablets as votive monuments.

[55] Kazarow, *AnzÖAK*, 1940, p. 28ff. See above, p. 29.

[56] Cf. above, p. 30.

[57] Kazarow, *AnzÖAK*, 1940, p. 30.

Other Hungarian archaeologists concerned themselves subsequently with the preference for lead shown in the manufacture of a considerable number of the tablets, together with the discovery of workshops specialised in casting such pieces. A. Brelich[59] has proved that lead as a primary material commanded a high price on the market—which must be taken as evidence that the use of this material in the manufacture of the Danubian tablets must have been imposed by certain cultic practices. Zoltán Oroszlán[60] shares the view that the workshops where the Pannonian lead tablets were cast must have functioned at Sirmium and Siscia.[61] His idea is that these metal reliefs are to be linked with local amulets and other magical objects, notably with the animal heads of certain keys from Pannonia, manufactured with the same magical purpose. According to Oroszlán, only the stone reliefs depicting Danubian Riders can have been votive monuments.

---

[58] Alföldi, *Bibliographia Pannonica* IV (1938), p. 33; *Daci e Romani in Transilvania*, Budapest 1940, p. 33f. (Bibliot. "Matea Corvino", no. 9); *FoliaArch* III-IV (1941), p. 176f. (Rev.: Kazarow, *BIAB* XV, 1946, p. 167) and *Zu den Schicksalen Siebenbürgens im Altertum*, Budapest 1944, p. 5 ("Ostmitteleurop. Bibliothek", no. 54).

[59] Brelich, *Laurae Aquincenses memoriae Val. Kuzsinszky dicatae*, I, Budapest, 1939, p. 140, n. 45 (*Diss. Pann* II, 10).

[60] Oroszlán, *DolgSzeg* XIX (1943), p. 1.

The finds made in Yugoslavia during the years 1937-1969 belong to the category of lead tablets brought to light in southern Pannonia (Pannonia Inferior), which are copies manufactured in series. For the territory of Upper Moesia the most important of recent discoveries is undoubtedly a relief representing a single Rider, a piece sculptured in marble and found at Naissus. It is the third monument of its kind brought to light in that province.[62]

The publication by the Croatian scholar Mihovil Abramić[63] of a series of pieces discovered in Dalmatia is an important contribution to the task of limiting the area of diffusion of the Danubian Rider cult in the form of a single Rider and in establishing the affinity of the Dalmatian reliefs with the similar monuments of Dacia. The appearance of small columns (colonnettes) in the repertoire peculiar to two Dalmatian reliefs (106, 107), according to Abramić, indicates that a separate place was reserved for the cult, in a form already known to us (147, 148). A rhomboidal object visible on a fragment from Salonae (111) close to the scene of the *criobolium* he identifies as an instrument necessary for the skinning of the ram.[64]

---

[61] A hypothesis accepted also by Tibór Nagy, *BpRég* XVI (1950), pp. 98 and 113, no. 43; and Jenö Fitz, *Intercisa* II (Dunapentele), Budapest 1957, p. 385 (*AH*, N.S. XXXVI). For the other Hungarian studies cf. S. Soproni, *AÉrt* LXXXI (1954), p. 50 and E. B. Thomas, *ActaA* VI (1955), p. 100.

[62] N. Vulić, *Spomenik* XCVIII (1941/8), p. 112. In publishing a marble relief (66), Alexandra Cermanović-Kuzmanović, (*Glasnik Muz, Kosovo i Metohije*, 1962-1963, pp. 309-316) accepts Tudor's views.

[63] Abramić, *Serta Hoffilleriana*, pp. 297-307 and *Vjesnik Dalmatinsku* LIV (1952), p. 120, basing himself on the Terracina relief (176), accepts the identification of the Dioscuri with the Danubian Riders.

[64] Abramić, *Serta Hoffilleriana*, p. 307. The Viminacium relief (55) was recently republished by M. Veličković, *Katalog grekih i rimskih terakota Narodni Muzej*, Beograd, 1967, p. 112, pl. XXIV, 69 (col. "Antika", III/6). This author is unacquainted with the literature of the problem; the attribution of the monument to the Thracian Rider is mistaken; the presence of Cautes and Cautopates is not confirmed, etc. S. Radojcić's article, published

The study by G. Q. Giglioli[65] of two unpublished gems preserved in the Etrusco-Roman Museum at Perugia gives him occasion to formulate a series of personal theories regarding the Danubian Rider cult. From the scene depicted on its obverse, one of these gems must undoubtedly be included in the series of Danubian Rider monuments. The name of the demon Abraxas-Iao engraved on the reverse for the first time gives evidence of the links between this cult and that of the Dioscuri with the Basilidean sects (228, A, B). Giglioli explains the "puzzles" concerned with these Danubian deities by their representing the Dioscuri associated with a great goddess (Cybele, Demeter, Hecate, Astarte, Tyche, Helen, etc.), showing by the same token that they have nothing to do with the Cabiri and the Thracian Rider. On the other hand the Italian scholar is opposed to the hypothesis of a Scythian or Sarmatian origin for these deities (as formulated by Rostovtseff) for the simple reason that in the zone envisaged, north of the Black Sea, there is a total lack of Danubian tablets. We are confronted, says Giglioli, with a syncretistic religion the iconography of which reveals a *koine* of different elements, connected with one another above all by the beliefs of the Barbarians of the Roman Army guarding the Imperial frontiers. Subsequently, numerous elements from different cults were absorbed into this repertoire—Mithras, Sol, Jupiter Dolichenus, and Sabazius—a fact which can be explained by the existence of a vast *koine* in the practice of the mysteries at this period. The cult has strong links with some elements of the *tabellae defixionum*, the magical papyruses containing the names of demons, unintelligible words, strange blasphemies, and so on, compiled in such a manner as to convince or intimidate peoples believing they could make use of them against the forces of evil. These protective beings were invoked by means of allusions to Heaven, Earth, and Hell. "All this" Giglioli writes "gives me the impression that the Danubian gems are

---

in *Glasnik Držranog Muzeja Sarajevc*, N.S., 1945, p. 5f., remains inaccessible to me. Veličković dates the Viminacium relief to the third century, ignoring N. Vasić's opinion, *AA*, 1905, p. 102.

[65] Giglioli, *ArchClas* III (1951), pp. 199-210. It was not till 1970 that I was able to gain access to this important article. Unfortunately Giglioli was unacquainted with my articles published in *ED* VII and VIII and used the obsolete catalogues of Hampel and Buday.

not *tesserae* nor the symbols of certain mystical degrees or certain secret cults, but that they lead us into a humbler and more modest universe, much more popular, however, and widely diffused—the universe of amulets."[66] In our attempts to identify the Danubian Riders, the Italian archaeologist thinks we are still faced with the same uncertainty expressed two centuries ago by Montfaucon when he said that "we have no means of penetrating the secrets of this religion".[67]

Two stone tablets preserved in Czechoslovak museums (very probably coming from Dacia—154, 183) and two red wax copies of a gem (199) led the Czech professor Oldrich Pelikán[68] to identify an independent cult. Syncretistic in character, he thinks it had many borrowings from Phrygian religions and possessed an entirely secret liturgy.

On the Danubian tablets from Dacia and the fundamental problems of this cult (its origin, the nature of its deities, syncretism, etc.), certain Rumanian and Soviet specialists have published theories occasioned by the *Corpus* I published in 1937/1938. C. Daicoviciu[69] thinks the whole question of origins still remains doubtful, and that it would be difficult to consider Dacia alone, since the stone reliefs which represent it there could indicate merely an importation or inspiration from the south-east. But despite this uncertainty of origin, he thinks the wide diffusion of this cult in Roman Dacia is to be explained by mutual spiritual influences between the sculptural representations on the one hand and the Dacian religions on the other, subsequently completed by other religious and sculptural influences proceeding from Iran and above all the Orient.[70]

---

[66] Giglioli, *op. cit.*, p. 208. This was also the opinion of Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets*. The University of Michigan Press, 1950, who regarded them as *love amulets*.

[67] Montfaucon, *Ant. expl.* (ed. II, 1772), p. 364. Cf. Giglioli, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

[68] Pelikán, *Sbornik-Bratislava* IX (1958), pp. 253-265 and *Sbornik Praci Filosofické faculty Brnanské Univ. Rada.arch. Klas.* XIV (1965), pp. 193-199.

[69] Daicoviciu, *La Transylvanie dans l'Antiquité*, Bucarésti 1945, p. 148, n. 1.

[70] *Ibidem*, p. 155f. Similar conclusions were reached also by I. K. Kolosovskaia, *Vestnik Dvrevnei Istorii* I (1957)f., who accepted the idea of autochthonous Dacian influences in the repertoire of the Danubian tablets. Cf. also *Vestnik Drevnci Istorii* 3, (1947), p. 232.

I. T. Kruglikova[71] on the other hand recognizes in the sculptural repertoire of the Danubian tablets the expression of a particular syncretism, grafted on to a Dacian local cult—the product of the colonization of Dacia by soldiers and a civil population originating in various provinces of the Roman Empire. These local deities, who could have been introduced into Dacia previously by the Scythian and Sarmatian migrations, could also have been influenced during the Roman epoch by innumerable cults (the Thracian Rider, Cybele, Nemesis, the Dioscuri, Mithras, etc.). Subsequently certain representations of the Danubian Riders must have found their way into the world of magic as amulets.

Certain general considerations touching on the problems posed by the Danubian Rider tablets were brought together in an article by the Bulgarian archaeologist Janka Mladenova.[72] She insists on the Moesian origin of the cult, giving as her reason the numerous tablets found in Moesia. The first representations of a single Danubian Rider must have been inspired, she thinks, by those dedicated to the Thracian Rider and then later came into the orbit of Mithraism. The appearance of Victory and the Thracian standard on the reliefs with a single Danubian Rider allows them to be dated from the third century A.D.[73] In Mladenova's opinion the doubling of the Danubian Rider cannot have been the result of religious and artistic influence by the cult of the Dioscuri, for there was no direct contact between the two groups of representations. The sculptural representations of the Dioscuri appear only in the Greek Black Sea colonies and gained no more than a weak foothold outside that area in the rest of the Balkan Peninsula. She points furthermore to significant differences between the monuments of the Dioscuri and those of the Danubian Riders. The symbol of the vase flanked by lion and snake, with that of the stars and other celestial elements found on the Danubian tablets, she regards as later iconographic introductions, borrowed from Mithraic representations and not from the symbolism of the Dioscuri. The double representation of the Rider is for her not a local idea but comes from the solar cults, of which it is characteristic (Rostovtseff's theory). Mladenova goes on to declare that the metal plaques from Razgrad cannot be the prototype of the Danubian single-Rider reliefs, since all they show is the image of an equestrian deity surrounded by chthonic symbols, whereas the Danubian Rider was a solar and celestial deity, a character attested by the double axe he holds in his hand. Moreover the Razgrad tablets, in view of the specifically third century syncretistic elements they contain, cannot be dated from the end of the first century A.D. as certain specialists have wished (Rostovtseff, Kazarow, Tudor, etc.).

---

[71] I. T. Kruglikova, *Dakia v epochu rimskoi okupazii*, p. 148f. = *Analele Romîno-Sovietice-Istorie* 2 (1956), p. 83f., I. I. Russu, *Anuarul Inst. Stud. Clasice* V (1947), p. 83, does not agree with the Dacian origin of the Danubian Riders. Gr. Florescu, Hommages Herrmann, p. 371f. sees an *interpretatio romana* in the Danubian Rider reliefs, copied from the Rhineland models of the snake-footed Rider. He does not accept the artistic influence of the Thracian Rider. At the same time it must be observed that in Dacia—the home of the Danubian Riders—monuments of the snake-footed Rider were still unknown in the 2nd-3rd centuries.

[72] Mladenova, "Veliki varchu izobrajceniiate na dunavckite Konizi" (Notes sur les représentations des Cavaliers danubiens), *Studia in honorem Acad. D. Dečev*, Sofia 1958, pp. 545-555 (I have used only the French summary).

[73] The inference is mistaken, because these elements are found only in the repertoire of the Danubian tablets with two Riders.

But the most wide-ranging and important analysis of the essential problems raised by the Danubian Rider cult (elements of iconography, cult scenes, chronology, classification, place of appearance of the tablets, and so on) is to be found in a more recent work of great scope signed by Ernest Will.[74] This author sets out to examine in his monograph the Danubian tablets in parallel with the reliefs of the Thracian Rider, of Mithras, Jupiter Dolichenus, and Sabazius, but solely from the point of view of art history. Actually, however, his work encompasses all the essential problems of the subject. A good number of the discussions initiated by Will could have been avoided, and different conclusions reached, if he had been acquainted with the main literature of the subject during the years 1938-1954. But the bibliography he gives (pp. 9-10) shows that he has ignored the essential contributions published during that interval of time.[75] As the reviews have emphasized,[76] Will's book, despite its merits, contains a great number of oversights, obscurities, over-long digressions, and contradictions—there is a great need of addenda and corrigenda. It would take too long here to go over all the problems discussed by this author, only to reach at the end of it all conclusions already formulated by other students of the Danubian Rider religion. Besides, they are all to be found summarized in his index (p. 468). All the same, I shall here extract some important statements from his preliminary remarks. Certain of the Danubian Rider tablets and gems, he says, must have done duty as amulets or icons owing to their small size (pp. 30-32); though they have not yet been discovered sanctuaries of this cult must have existed, and it was neither Greek nor oriental but Barbarian and local (p. 52). A special chapter devoted to the appearance of the iconography of the Danubian tablets (pp. 89-103) accepts some older hypotheses, that for instance of the borrowing of a single Rider from the Thracian Rider reliefs, while that of two Riders was inspired by the typology peculiar to the monuments of the Dioscuri frequent in the Greek cities of the Black Sea. The Kazarow-Tudor hypothesis identifying the Razgrad tablets with certain iconographic forms related to the single Danubian Rider and assigned to a later date than the typological crystallization of this category of monuments, is not accepted by Will, who places the bronzes in question in the usual series of the Thracian Rider (pp. 90-92). On the other hand, this author gives most particular attention to the classification and chronology of the Danubian tablets (pp. 312-331). He considers that the older system of classification did not take sufficient account of the iconographic and stylistic elements. I shall later analyse the distribution of the Danubian tablets into three principal classes, with the subdivisions proposed by Will (cf. below p. 85ff).

---

[74] Will, *Le relief cultuel gréco-romain, Contributions à l'histoire de l'art de l'Empire Romain,* Paris, 1955 (Bibl. Éc. Franç. d'Athènes et de Rome, 183). See also the conclusions reached in the article "Cultuale" (bassorilievo) published in *Encicl. dell'arte antica, classica e orientale,* s.v. pp. 966-970.

---

[75] We may quote: Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 67; Chapouthier, *RÉA*, 1939, p. 65f.; Kazarow, *AnzÖAK*, 1940, p. 25f.; Abramić, *Serta Hoffilleriana*, 1940, p. 297f.; Frova, *BINASA*, 1949, p. 35f.; Giglioli, *ArchClas*, 1951, p. 199, etc.

[76] J. Le Gall, *Latomus* XVI (1957), pp. 402-404; J. Marcadé, *RÉA* LIX (1957), pp. 171-178; J. M. C. Toynbee, *JRS* XLVII (1957), pp. 262-264; C. Vermeule, *Gnomon* XXIX (1957), pp. 369-376; I. S. Ryberg, *Americ. Jour. of Arch.* LXII (1958), pp. 347-348; D. Schlumberger, *Syria* XXXV (1958), pp. 378-389; O. J. Brendel, *Erasmus* XIII (1960), pp. 550-555; Fr. Chamoux, *RÉG* LXXIII (1960), pp. 253-255; M. Renard, *Rev. belge de Philol. et d'hist.*, XI (1962), pp. 592-593; etc.

After setting out his classification, based on the criterion of the division of the pictorial matter into three panels (registers), this author draws up a series of stylistic, chronological, and historical conclusions concerning the cult (pp. 318-355). He explains the manner in which, according to him, the transition occurred from the theme of a single Rider to that of two Riders, a development which he attributes to the influence of the symbolic triad present in the upper register of the first tablets (the group of the vase flanked by two snakes), facilitated by contact with the cult of the Dioscuri. On the reliefs with two Riders this symbolic triad was replaced, he thinks, by an anthropomorphic triad, figuring three busts. The typological and chronological study of the Danubian tablets based on the criteria applied by Will supports the general views expressed previously by myself (p. 328). It is also Will's opinion that we have to do with a local Dacian religion, which later spread over the area of the lower and middle Danubian basin. He seeks to reduce to the status of mere hypotheses the connections of the Danubian Rider cult with the Orient, Syria, Iran, and Scythia. He feels likewise obliged to attribute less importance to its relations with the Mithras religion (from which it borrowed the group of the lion, the vase, and the serpent). According to him this was not so great as it has been made out to be. In the French scholar's view, the rigorous anonymity surrounding the Danubian divinities made them easily confounded with the Dioscuri and Cabiri. It was, moreover, from their divinities that the artistic typology was derived, but resting on indigenous foundations. So far as concerns the origin and evolution of the Danubian Riders, he is likewise of the opinion that this religion appeared in Dacia after the Roman conquest, with the reliefs representing a single Rider, which he assigns to the second century A.D. (p. 329 and 459). The last manifestations of the cult are to be found in Pannonia, which became its place of refuge after the abandonment of Dacia by Aurelian (A.D. 271), as attested by the presence of the solar chariot on the Pannonian tablets, an element specific to the time of Aurelian. This element is to be regarded as an echo of the cult offered to the sun god, whom that Emperor and his mother worshipped (originating in Sirmium—p. 330). "In the history of the cult, so far as we can reconstruct it" writes Will "two primary aspects must be emphasized, on the one hand, from the religious point of view, its form as a mystery cult—approaching Mithraism—and on the other, from the social and artistic viewpoint, its provincial character."[77]

The iconographic formation of the Danubian tablets in their outstanding sculptural elements, that is to say their composition in registers, reflects a clear and definite evolution which can be traced back to the Hellenistic age, on the matrix of a series of monuments originating in the minor arts of ceramics, painting, glyptics, and so on (p. 355). These reliefs are unique in respect of the Rider-Gods they figure. They remain typical of provincial art in general but subordinate to the intellectual and artistic situation of their period (pp. 456-458).

Several of the Danubian Rider tablets found in Yugoslav territory have been studied by Marian Wenzel[78] in a series of articles. This author has detected in the repertoire of their artistic themes a certain number of iconographic and religious elements which have persisted to our own day in the religious and profane art of Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Yugoslav specialist Ivana Iskra-Ianošić[79] in a recent study attacks the problem of the typology of the lead plaques discovered in quantity in the area enclosed by the Danube and the Sava near their confluence (the southern part of the *Pannonia Inferior* province). Her aim is to "examine statistically their dispersal over the map and to attempt a typological grouping of the series of lead plaques," without trying to analyse the content or significance of the cult. But her statistics are incomplete even for the territory envisaged, and her data concerning the provenance, conservation, and publication of the monuments analysed are sometimes lacking in exactness. She also needs a tighter chronology of these plaques, even though in this case the statistical elements may be adequate. I shall concern myself later (p. 94ff) with the typological groups established by this author. In any event, her statistical study remains valuable for all investigators of the cult, since it records several discoveries on which the geographical data previously known were insufficient.

---

[77] Will, *Relief cultuel*, p. 331.

[78] Wenzel, *Starinar*, N.S. XII (1961), p. 24f.; *JWCI* (1961), p. 91f.; *Südost-Forschungen* XXI (1962), p. 102f.; *Jour. Warburg and Courtauld Instit.* XXIV (1961), p. 89f.; *Actes XII$^e$ Congr. Intern. Étud. Byzantines* III (1964), p. 415f. and *SlavRev* XXVI (1967), p. 363f.

[79] Iskra-Janošić, *OA* VI (1966), pp. 49-68, pl. I-VI with a chart. I have used only the German summary (pp. 61-68).

Recently LeRoy Campbell,[80] on the basis of important comparative material, has once again taken up the problem of the cultic and iconographic links between the Mithras religion and that of the Danubian Riders. He emphasizes certain elements common to the two religions (the solar divinities, the stars, the banquet, the group of snake, vase, lion, etc.) which he has studied with particular reference to the Dalmatian Danubian plaque (116). Campbell thus uncovers the Mithraic contribution to the sculptural formation of the Danubian Rider reliefs, together with their mutual influences.

In connection with the publication of 12 lead plaques (8 of which were unpublished or inadequately studied) brought to light in the territory of the ancient city of Sirmium, the American professor Edward L. Ochsenschlager[81] has made the latest important contribution to the subject of the iconography and interpretation of the Danubian Rider religion. In the group of lead plaques discovered in the south of Lower Pannonia and the north of Upper Moesia the author detects four types, one with variants (cf. below, p. 97ff). In several cases his classification is close to that proposed by Iskra-Ianošić. The geographical distribution of his finds, their dating, the nature of the plaques (icons or amulets?), the system of interpretation of their figures, the cultic symbols, their artistic composition, etc. are all problems tackled by this author. He solves them along the lines suggested by Professor LeRoy Campbell in his well-known monograph on the Mithras cult.

For 39 years, from the appearance, that is, of the 1937/1938 Corpus up to the new edition in 1969, the present author has not ceased to catalogue the new finds brought to light, arranging them systematically and interpreting them in numerous articles published especially in Rumania.[82] In this way the number of 134 monuments known in 1938 had increased by 1961 to 184. In 1969, after eight more years of research, they numbered 199, *until today the list comprises 232 pieces.*

---

[80] Leroy A. Campbell, *Mithraic Iconography and Ideology*, Leiden 1968, pp. 331-334 etc.

[81] Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium*, II, p. 51f.

In parallel with the work of compiling this catalogue, I have concerned myself with a whole series of problems posed by different specialists and discussed them in two of my articles.[83] In view of the absence of any new, conclusive discoveries, I have adhered to the fundamental conclusions I had already formulated in 1937/1938. These can be summarized as follows: what we have is a local cult; the Danubian Rider monuments cannot represent mere phylacteries or amulets; the iconography of the cult arose first under the influence of the Thracian Rider reliefs, but also under that of the Dioscuri; the Mithraic influences, both theological and artistic, cannot be ignored. In formulating these conclusions, I underline also the controversies which have arisen regarding the interpretation of the scenes engraved on the Danubian plaques (with their obscure ingredients), for the various authors mentioned above have interpreted them each in his own way.[84]

It is absolutely necessary to emphasize that among the monuments discovered there is not one piece which throws any conclusive light on the name of these divinities, their origin, or the numerous puzzles surrounding their cult.[85] Thus we are reduced, in treating these questions, to the mere interpretation of the scenes depicted, by reference to such precise facts as are known about other analogous ancient cults. The danger, in the circumstances, lies in the imagination of the investigators, setting up hypothesis after hypothesis. All these accumulated hypotheses may be grouped, finally, in three or four categories, and these I propose to examine in the following chapters.

---

[82] Tudor, *BCMI* XXXII (1939), pp. 70-79; *MIR* II (1940), pp.110-113; *OR*, 3rd ed., *passim*; *Omagiul Daicoviciu*, pp. 519-523; *Hommages Herrmann*, pp. 739-744; *Dacia*, N.S. IV (1960), pp. 333-362 and V (1961), pp. 317-343; *Das Altertum* VIII (1962), pp. 234-243; *Apulum* V (1965), pp. 563-566; *SMJP* I (1968), pp. 39-43 and *Pontica* V (1972), pp. 503-511.

[83] *Dacia* V (1961), pp. 317-343 and *Das Altertum* VIII (1962), pp. 234-243.

[84] Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 69; Chapouthier, *RÉA* XLI (1939), p. 65 et Ch. Picard, *Rev. hist. des religions* CL (1956), p. 3 who notes: "The supernatural beings of paganism, products of human belief, have a right, like individual human beings of the past, to a sort of biography and history wherever possible." At the end of last century S. Reinach, *Bull. Commiss. arch. di Roma*, 1894, p. 445, observed in regard to the Thracian and Danubian Rider reliefs: "Only the stone monuments in their naive and far from insipid barbarism can give us an exact picture of the Thracian villages and their beliefs during the first centuries of the Christian era." See also E. A. Roman, "Cultul Cavalerilor danubieni", *Studii Teologice* XVII (1965), pp. 450-460.

## B. Number of the Monuments and their Area of Diffusion[86]

The total of the sculptured monuments of the Danubian Riders at the present moment numbers 232 pieces—some of them still intact, others fragmentary or worn, and a certain number lost. In comparison with the first *Corpus* of them compiled by myself 39 years ago, their number has been doubled by new finds. I believe, however, that there must be further unpublished examples still preserved in different museums and collections.

In comparison with other sculptural pieces of a cultic nature brought to light in the same geographical area as the Danubian provinces, the Danubian Rider monuments are exceeded in number only by those of the Mithras cult, which are about two-thirds more numerous.[87] The distribution of finds by provinces is given in the following table (up to 1975):

---

[85] Thus J. Babelon, *Rev. numismat.*, X (1947-1948), p. 5, sees a curious mixture of solar monotheism... half-Thracian, half-Persian divinities, with some alloy of the religious beliefs of Asia Minor. The Rider-Gods represent "a syncretism of Mithras and the Thracian hero" and several of the ceremonial scenes "are identical with the mystical rites of the Mithras cult."

[86] Subjects repeated either symmetrically or as a group are noted thus: (two), (three); those recurring separately thus: (twice).

In the case of identical lead plaques and gems, only the one described in full has been indexed. The corresponding numbers are as follows: 34(*230*);*42*(*43*, *206*); 72 (*35*); 75 (*36*, *74*); 120 (*121*, *212*); 125 (*115*, *221*); 127 (*30*, *54*, *67*, *116*, *128*, *129*, *167*, *215*); 132 (*68*, *69*, *134*, *141*, *142*, *143*, *144*, *145*, *163*, *168*, *180*, *185*, *219*, *212*); 133 (*51*, *52*, *60*, *61*, *117*, *120*, *124*, *130*, *131*, *164*, *165*, *166*, *186*, *209*, *217*, *218*, *220*, *223*, *231*); 135 (*70*, *136*, *211*, *214*, *224*); 137 (*138*, *169*, *170*, *208*); 140 (*139*, *172*); 162 (*151*, *171*, *213*, *216*, *222*); 195 (*196*).

Nos. 226-227 (Pannonia Inferior) are unpublished.

| | *Number of Examples* |
|---|---|
| 1. Dacia Superior (*1-30; 198; 200-204*) | 36 |
| 2. Dacia Inferior (*31-49; 205-208; 230*) | 24 |
| 3. Moesia Superior (*50-70; 209-211*) | 24 |
| 4. Moesia Inferior (*71-103; 229; 232*) | 34 |
| 5. Thracia (*104-105*) | 2 |
| 6. Dalmatia (*106-117*) | 12 |
| 7. Pannonia Inferior (*118-146; 166; 212-217; 231*) | 47 |
| 8. Pannonia Superior (*147-165; 167-172*) | 25 |
| 9. Noricum (*173*) | 1 |
| 10. Italia (*174-179*) | 6 |
| 11. Gallia (*180*) | 1 |
| 12. Britannia (*181*) | 1 |
| 13. Provenance unknown (*182-197, 199, 228*) | 19 |
| Total over all | 232 |

Of the pieces listed in the category of unknown provenance the greater part are gems or belong to ancient collections.

We note when we look at this table that the principal area of diffusion of this cult embraces the Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire: Pannonia, Moesia, and Dacia. There were weak echoes in Dalmatia, Thrace, and Noricum, while the examples found in Italy, Gaul, and Britain must have been the result of importation, pieces brought there by soldiers, merchants, and slaves from the Danubian provinces. Thus the main zone of radiation of the Danubian Rider cult embraces Dacia, Pannonia, and Moesia, since nine-tenths of these monuments, 88 per cent to be exact, were brought to light in these three great provinces.

---

[87] Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, pp. 153-182. No such numerical comparison can be made for this territory between the Danubian tablets and the bas-reliefs of the Thracian Rider, because the main area of diffusion of the Danubian Riders was north of the Danube, while the Thracian god was worshipped especially on the two Balkan slopes; cf. Kazarow, *Denkmäler, passim* (a *corpus* completed in 1938). In the region of the Danubian Rider cult about 150 monuments dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus have been discovered, cf. Merlat, *Rép. Jup. Dol.*, pp. 11-146.

To judge solely from the number of finds, we should have to consider Pannonia as the country of origin of this religion. But the fact is that this region has not so far yielded one piece of the Single Rider category (Class A), which represents the most ancient form of these monuments. All the Pannonian plaques belong to the second category (Class B) of the reliefs (that of two Riders) and must consequently be of a later period than that of the numerous pieces found in Dacia and Moesia. We note also that of the 72 plaques found in the two Pannonias, 59 are merely lead copies of certain originals, always the same. The number of monuments with a single Rider is much lower in the two Moesias than in Dacia (cf. below, p. 80), and 12 lead pieces with two Riders show the same stereotyped reproductions (51, 52, 54, 60-61, 67-70, 74, 209, 211), thus being pieces imported from the territory of Lower Pannonia. Dacia, on the other hand, has yielded only four reproductions of metal pieces (30, 35, 43, 208), so that it can be considered as the province with the most ancient, most numerous, and most varied representations of the Danubian Riders. Chronologically after Dacia come the two Moesias, and finally the two Pannonias.

Dalmatia, with 12 finds, illustrates a characteristic feature noted by F. Cumont in the case of other oriental religions. His observation can be formulated as follows: the feeble echoes of these cults in Dalmatia can be explained by the absence of military garrisons there.[88]

The two modest Thracian finds clearly show how mistaken are those who have considered this religion as of eminently Thracian origin and as having radiated into the rest of the Empire from this south Balkan region.[89] We can no longer designate the two Danubian divinities as "Thracian Riders" or "Thraco-Mithraic Riders". Nor can the cult of the Danubian Riders be confounded with that of the Thracian Rider-Hero, which had absolutely different artistic and religious characteristics (cf. below, p. 58f). We notice also that the geographical areas of distribution of the two religions touch but do not overlap, in the Lower Danube valley.

---

[88] Cumont, *Myst. Mithra*, p. 75. For the diffusion of Mithraic monuments in Dalmatia see: Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, pp. 253-270.

[89] Hampel, *AÉrt* 1911, p. 409. One year later (cf. *AÉrt* 1912, p. 339) the Hungarian scholar abandoned his theory on the Thracian origin of the Danubian Riders. In 1912 he inclined to a Dacian origin of the cult and thought that its appearance was connected with Trajan's wars of conquest in Dacia. The event, he thought, might have been demonstrated by the presence of Victory crowning the two Danubian Riders!

Generally speaking, the Thracian Rider was worshipped especially south of the Danube (Thrace and the two Moesias), while the Danubian Riders were much more frequently worshipped north of the river (Dacia and Pannonia). The contact between the two cults took place on its Daco-Moesian banks, where also the mutual artistic and religious influences are observed.

Account must be taken also of certain restricted areas where the monuments occur with special frequency, owing to the presence of metal workshops able to produce with facility numerous copies of the Danubian plaques in lead. One of these areas was situated around the cities of Romula, Sucidava, and Oescus (34-37, 42-44, 72-75, 208), with its principal centre of diffusion it seems in Sucidava itself, to judge from the considerable number of lead objects brought to light there.[90] A second area of great frequency is that of the city of Sirmium, projecting into the space between the Sava and the Danube close to their confluence. This region has yielded about fifty lead plaques, catalogued by the specialists in several types with series of variants, but issuing none the less from the same urban metalworking centre and confined to a very short period of time.[91] It was not only the workshops of Sirmium (*plumbarii*) which so largely contributed to the reproduction in series of lead plaques, but also the important garrison of the city, the soldiers of which were the most assiduous customers of these third-century "ikons".

As for the area of diffusion of the Danubian Rider monuments, we must note the justice of Will's remark (*Rel. cult.*, p. 356) that "the Rider religion scarcely ventured outside its homeland, Dacia and the neighbouring provinces", whereas the Mithraic monuments were spread throughout the Empire. Moreover, these latter attained a much greater variety of sculptural and religious types than those peculiar to the Danubian plaques.

---

[90] D. Tudor, *Sucidava. Une cité daco-romaine et byzantine en Dacie,* Brussels 1965, pp. 47-50.

[91] Ianošić, *OA* VI (1966), pp. 49-68, and the chart; Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, pp. 52-55.

### 1. *The Circumstances of Discovery*

One of the greatest difficulties in the interpretation of the Danubian reliefs is occasioned by our poor knowledge of the archaeological contexts in which they were found. No more than 31 pieces bear an indication of their archaeological context (8, 17, 21, 32, 37, 40, 41, 42, 56, 60, 61, 65, 66, 72, 74, 77, 80, 86, 96, 99, 118, 120, 155, 156, 160, 166, 180, 181, 200-208, 212, 215, 219, 220) such as to allow the fixing of definite data about the place where the cult was performed and the character of its worshippers. But for most of them we have nothing but the vague indication "found in Roman ruins", with nothing to specify the nature of the ruins. Only for a few of them do we possess some modest topographical details.

Nine monuments (8, 21, 32, 118, 200, 206, 208, 209) have been found among the traces of Roman camps, an indication of the popularity of the cult among soldiers, expressed also by the subject-matter of certain of the scenes engraved on the plaques. Six plaques (155, 156, 201, 202, 204, 220) were found in the *sacella*, small domestic chapels, of Roman dwellings, a proof that these deities were also worshipped at the domestic altar. One marble roundel comes from the ruins of a *mithraeum* uncovered at Londinium (181)—a discovery testifying to the fact that the Danubian Riders could very well be σύνναιοι, sharing a shrine, with the Iranian deity. Two other finds (56, 65) were made in Roman necropolises—a lead medallion from Viminacium (56) was among other pieces of funeral furniture in a burial,[92] and another monument (65) was found in a military cemetery for soldiers of the legion VII Claudia. These last two discoveries show more clearly still the close connection of soldiers with this cult, as also the chthonic character of its monuments, both of which features are likewise to be discerned in their sculptural repertoire.

---

[92] Hampel, *AÉrt* 1912, p. 340, found a link between this discovery and the Dacio-Roman wars and identified the medallion with a decoration won by a Roman soldier in military service. Equally mistaken was his view of a medallion found in the ruins of a colonnade at Aquincum (120). He thought it had been abandoned by a Roman gladiator, a circumstance which would indicate the presence of the Danubian Rider cult in the athletes' pantheon, cf. Hampel, *BpRég*, 1904, p. 5. Recently T. Nagy (*ActaA* XXII (1970), p. 447, n. 14) has proved that the medallion comes from an *aedes Augustalium.*

In 1970 a fragment was found in a *villa suburbana* of Romula in Dacia (207). Another *villa romana* yielded a second monument of the kind (220). In the same year a lead plaque was found in the excavations of the Romano-Byzantine citadel of Sucidava, in an archaeological context dated by its coins to the second half of the third and first half of the fourth centuries (208). The ruins of a building of Aquincum, which functioned as an *aedes Augustalium*, have also yielded a single monument (120), as have the traces of another *aedes Augustalium* in Roman Sarmizegetusa (17).

As these data show, the worship of these gods could be performed in different places and their ikons could be deposited just as well in domestic *sacella* as in Mithraic *spelaea*, or in burials, or in public places, and so on. The explanation of this fact is to be sought in the various religious functions served by the Danubian Riders and in their numerous cultic relations with celestial, terrestrial, or chthonic deities.

Thus we arrive at the important question whether the Danubian Riders possessed places specially devoted to their cult (temples, sanctuaries, chapels, and the like). Were such places uniquely reserved to the practice of their public cult and the secret ceremonial of their mysteries, or were they always σύνναιοι with other deities?

This question can only find a satisfactory answer through the attentive study of the repertoire of the scenes sculptured on the plaques. It is in fact a scenery rich in cult details, in pictures of secret ceremonies, in symbols of all sorts, and in rich and varied liturgical properties. The fitting celebration of this cult and its mysteries, with their complicated display, and the storing of its religious equipment must necessarily have demanded a place specially designed for the purpose.[93] Only in regions where the Danubian Rider cult was not widely diffused could its votive offerings have been deposited in temples dedicated to other deities, as in the case of the marble roundel deposited in the London Mithraeum (181).

---

[93] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 245, considers that in Dacia the two Riders were worshipped according to the rite of the old Geto-Dacian god Zalmoxis, that is in grottoes, and that these can be identified on the Rider bas-reliefs. Hampel, *AÉrt* XXIII (1903), p. 363, sought to identify four sanctuaries devoted to the Danubian Rider cult in Pannonia, but his proofs are not convincing.

Up to the present moment we have no evidence of the worship of the Danubian Rider-Gods in the same sanctuaries as the Thracian Rider. If the custom of worshipping the Danubian Riders in sanctuaries dedicated to other deities was usual, then the cases of θεοὶ σύνναιοι should have been much more numerous than they in fact are.

Attentive scrutiny of the scenes depicted on the Danubian plaques allows us to affirm categorically that they nowhere contain the grotto in blocks or with an arched opening similar to the "natural grotto" depicted on Mithraic bas-reliefs.[94] However, there can be no denying *the absence of the vault of heaven* from the Danubian Rider reliefs, though they do accompany the solar divinities with other celestial symbols. The vault of heaven is indicated by a simple arc (1, 18, 34, 64, 65, 66, 176) or by a panel containing the same elements (15, 16, 19, 58, 182). It appears in cleanest and most elegant design on the Pannonian lead plaques (30, 54, 127-129, 167; 132, 134, 141-145, 168, 185; 133, 164-166, 186). In these pieces its arch is adorned with ovules and pearls and rests on two small columns. In the opening of the arch is Sol with his four-horse chariot surrounded by stars. The multitude of stars in the upper zone of the relief precisely indicates the firmament.

In the ancient world the sky was imagined in the form of an immense vaulted grotto and was associated with a variety of beliefs and superstitions.[95] Porphyry regarded the Mithraic grotto as symbolizing the totality of the universe and its cosmic elements.[96] In the shade of this vault the gods of the three spheres—celestial, terrestrial, and underworld—could be worshipped simultaneously. This triple aspect is likewise reproduced on the Danubian plaques. For that reason, it seems, the sculptors of the Danubian Rider monuments sought to represent the vault of heaven by elegant architectural equivalents.

It is difficult to state categorically that the celebration of the cult and the practice of its mysteries took place only in underground rooms—the *megara*. Such a custom would have been in keeping with the powerful influence exerted by Mithraic mystery ceremonial on the Danubian Rider cult.

---

[94] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 7.

[95] Porphyrius, *De antro nympharum*, 6; cf. E. Maionica, *AEMÖ* II (1878), pp. 33ff.; Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 198; Turchi, *Relig. mist.*, p. 193 etc.

[96] Porphyrius, *op. cit.*, 4-6. Cf. Campbell, *loc. cit.*

## 2. *The Distinction between the Danubian Rider-God Reliefs and Representations of Other Rider-Gods*

Certain editors of the monuments devoted to the Danubian Rider-Gods have not always correctly understood the groups of bas-reliefs really belonging to them, and have in consequence introduced into the catalogue of Danubian plaques pieces representing other equestrian deities, completely foreign to this cult. First J. Hampel, and later A. Buday, introduced into their catalogues a quantity of pieces which really belonged to the monuments of the Thracian Rider, the Dioscuri, the Cabiri, or even to the iconography of funerary scenes.[97]

The distinction between the Thracian Rider and the single Danubian Rider is easily made. The first can be distinguished from the second by the absence of the man under the horse's hooves and his principal attributes, the fish and the ram. There are other symbols, too, peculiar to the Danubian Rider which are never found on the

---

[97] A mistake refuted by Rostovtseff, *Tablettes du Louvre*, p. 14, n. 1 and p. 15, n. 1. Among the monuments mistakenly included in the catalogues of Hampel and Buday, there are two pieces offering iconographic elements similar to those in the Danubian tablets. A fragmentary bas-relief found at Intercisa in Pannonia (cf. Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1903, p. 316, no. 12 = Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 21, fig. 15 = *Intercisa* I, p. 331, no. 331) represents a Rider flooring a snakefooted creature near a tree. It was dedicated: *Deo Dobrati Eutices ser. d.* The votive inscription, the snakefoot, and the absence of symbols specific to the Danubian Riders suggests to me quite a different deity. The name of the god is Thracian (cf. I. I. Russu, *Die Sprache der Thraco-Daker*, Bucharest 1969, p. 117). The snakefoot floored by the horse is common in the repertoires of Rhineland stelae. The second monument catalogued by Hampel and Buday comes from Şeica Mică (distr. Sibiu, Rumania) and is today preserved in the Museum of Sibiu (cf. Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1909, p. 320, fig. 15 = D. Tudor, *Orase, tîrguri şi sate din Dacia Romană*, Bucharest 1968, p. 174 = *CIL* III, 967). I have already shown that it is a funeral stele with three registers. In the first register a rider is trampling a fallen enemy; the second register is occupied by a country scene and in the third we have a scene of sacrifice. Rostovtseff, *loc. cit.*, identified the horseman with the Thracian Rider, while I have shown (*ED* VIII, 1937, p. 202, n. 1) that what we have are pictures from the life of a Roman veteran retired at Şeica Mică: his combats with the Barbarians, his activities as a farmer, and his sacrifices to the gods.

Thracian Rider monuments. The same distinctions can be detected in the monuments dedicated to the Dioscuri or the Cabiri—they too lack the man under the horses' hooves. Without in any way denying the mutual influences in the iconography and cult of the three categories of religious monuments, we can state without risk of error that each one had an artistic repertoire peculiar to itself and independent of the other two.

## C. Technological Problems

### 1. *Materials used in the Manufacture of the Danubian Rider Monuments*

The primary material used in the manufacture of the Danubian monuments was quite varied, as a statistical analysis will show. *Marble* takes first place (1-4, 6-15, 17-20, 22-29, 31, 32, 38, 39, 47, 49, 50, 53, 58, 59, 62-66, 71, 76, 78-80, 84-88, 90-101, 103, 105-109, 111-113, 118, 119, 122, 147, 149, 152-155, 157-161, 177-179, 181-184, 198, 200-205, 227); with 102 pieces almost half the total. Then comes *lead* (30, 34-37, 42-44, 48, 51, 52, 54, 56, 60, 61, 67-70, 72-75, 81, 83, 115-117, 120, 121, 123-146, 150, 151, 162-172, 180, 185, 186, 206, 208-226) with almost as many (90 pieces). A much smaller number are in *ordinary stone* (5, 16, 21, 33, 82, 89, 110, 114, 148, 156, 175, 176, 207, making 13 pieces, a proportion small also in comparison with the votive objects of other local cults. The *engraved gems*, most of them manufactured from a still unidentified precious mineral, also number 13 pieces (187-197, 199, 228). Lastly, there are 5 examples in *terracotta* (40, 41, 55, 77, 104); 4 in *bronze* (45, 46, 57, 174); and one in copper (173). One sole plaque is manufactured of a material still unknown. There are also two moulds (40, 77) for the manufacture of Danubian Rider reliefs in terracotta.

Some interesting technical details should be noted, such as the little bits of coloured glass fixed in the fish's eye (22 b), the re-used plaques (98, 99, 103), or the pieces made by means of a wood-carving technique (78, 113).

The distribution by provinces of the materials used in the manufacture of the Danubian plaques is set out in the following table:

| *Province* | *Marble* | *Ordinary Stone* | *Bronze Copper* | *Lead* | *Terra-cotta* | *Engraved Gems* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Dacia superior | 32 | 3 | – | 1 | – | – | 36 |
| 2. Dacia inferior | 7 | 2 | 2 | 11 | 2 | – | 24 |
| 3. Moesia superior | 9 | – | 1 | 13 | 1 | – | 24 |
| 4. Moesia inferior | 25 | 2 | – | 6 | 1 | – | 34 |
| 5. Thracia | 1 | – | – | – | 1 | – | 2 |
| 6. Dalmatia | 7 | 2 | – | 3 | – | – | 12 |
| 7. Pannonia inferior | 3 | – | – | 44 | – | – | 47 |
| 8. Pannonia superior | 11 | 2 | – | 12 | – | – | 25 |
| 9. Noricum | – | – | 1 | – | – | – | 1 |
| 10. Italia | 3 | 2 | 1 | – | – | – | 6 |
| 11. Gallia | – | – | – | 1 | – | – | 1 |
| 12. Britannia | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | 1 |
| 13. Provenance unknown | 5 | – | – | 1 | – | 13 | 19 |
| *Total* | 104 | 13 | 5 | 92 | 5 | 13 | 232 |

To recapitulate these data: while marble or ordinary stone predominate, numbering 118 pieces, with lead in second place with 92, pieces of bronze, copper, and terracotta appear only sporadically. As for the engraved gems, since their provenance is unknown, they can throw no light on our knowledge of the distribution by provinces of these monuments.

The most numerous stone reliefs come from the provinces rich in this material, as is the case with the two Dacias and the two Moesias. We note the small number of ordinary local stone plaques (limestone etc.) compared with those in marble (13 to 102). As the provinces of Dacia and Moesia possessed hardly any marble of good quality, it follows that this material was imported from elsewhere and worked by native sculptors into the respective plaques. A petrographic analysis would be needed to tell us which quarries supplied the marble for the carvings of these Rider-Gods. It is very probable that for the two Dacias and Lower Moesia, the marble was imported from the celebrated quarries of the islands of the Aegean and of Greece through the Greek cities of the Black Sea shores. For Dalmatia, Upper Moesia, and the two Pannonias, where the number of marble monuments is in any case much less, the Italian quarries might also be considered. The identical style of certain stone plaques (those brought to light, for instance, at Tibiscum) is evidence that in certain places there were studios specialized in this kind of sculpture, in which beside the common artistic elements we may also note the identical arrangement of the registers and a certain similarity of repertoire (22-24, 200-204).

Bronze, a less expensive metal than lead, was used only quite exceptionally and almost exclusively for the most ancient category of these monuments, figuring only a single Rider. The five terracotta examples come from southern Dacia, Moesia, and Thrace, that is to say from those provinces where ceramic centres developed and became famous by reason of the sculptural qualities of their earthen material (Sucidava, Viminacium, Montana, etc.)[98] In fact, clay moulds have been discovered at Sucidava and Montana. They were used for casting in terracotta the scenes reproduced on the Danubian Rider plaques (40, 77). The Montana mould (77) is even provided on its reverse with a sort of handle for its manipulation. The workshops of this locality have yielded other moulds, for terracotta plaques connected with the cults of various deities—Heracles, Hygieia, Artemis, the Dioscuri, Dionysus, and Hermes.[99]

We shall not, on the other hand, be able to say anything precise about the engraved gems and the other pieces easily transported from one region to another, the identification of the workshops where they were engraved being most difficult, if not absolutely impossible. All that we can do is to note the undeniable evidence of the presence of such workshops at Romula[100] in Dacia and at Novae[101] in Moesia, regions where the Danubian Rider cult flourished.

In distinction from what we observe of other religious monuments of the period, lead was used on an exceptional scale for the manufacture of these plaques. In fact, the number of lead pieces is almost the equal of those in stone, and it is Lower Pannonia which takes first place (with 43 pieces), followed at some distance by Upper

---

[98] D. Tudor, *Sucidava*, p. 41; Veličković, *Katalog*, p. 109f. and I. Welkow, *BIAB* XIV (1940/42), p. 188.

[99] Kazarow, *Pisciculi*, p. 146ff. The matrices discovered in this workshop do not prove that the Danubian Riders were συμβώμοι with the other deities.

[100] D. Tudor, *Apulum* VI (1967), p. 224.

[101] Alecsandra Dimitrova, *Gemi-amuleti s gnosticeski izobrajenia* ("Magical intaglios of gnostic character"), *Archeologiia*, Sofia, 3, 1968, pp. 24-28.

Pannonia (12 pieces) and Lower Dacia (12 pieces). The frequent occurrence of the Pannonian lead plaques had already been linked in the nineteenth century with the numerous metal workshops operating in the urban centres of this province.[102] At the same time we cannot, in the manner of certain authors,[103] explain the great number of lead plaques by the absence of stone in Pannonia or of sculptural clay in other regions, because lead was used only for this sole class of religious monuments. I recently drew attention[104] to the fact that the predilection for lead must be connected with the magical side of the Danubian Rider cult, particularly in the pieces of the nature of προστηθίδια (pectorals). The use of lead would then be intimately bound up with their religious function, for otherwise it was more expensive than stone or bronze. The workshops specializing in lead casting functioned at Sirmium, Siscia, Aquileia, Sucidava, and so on.[105] It is equally true on the other hand that lead was much easier to work than stone or bronze. Once the process of extraction of lead from its ore had begun, the metal melted at a temperature of 327° C, or a third of that needed for bronze in an alloy of 85% copper with 15% tin. Possibly the casting of lead in the moulds was in certain cases performed by priests or by votaries of the cult, in any case by persons able to procure a mould.[106]

Apart from the Pannonian workshops, it must be supposed that similar workshops were operating in the region Romula-Sucidava-Oescus, where in recent years numerous Danubian Rider plaques in lead have been found (34, 35, 36, 41, 43, 45, 48, 72, 73, 75, 81, 83, 208, 230). With one exception (208) all these plaques are distinct from those of Pannonia both in their repertoire and in their form and style of execution. It seems that it was Sucidava where the workshops specialized in lead-casting were to be found.[107] Rich lead mines, exploited by the Romans, were abundant near the Danube, in the mountainous region of northern Yugoslavia and the Rumanian Banat. A glance at the map of lead plaque finds shows that most of them come from the neighbourhood of the banks of the Danube. In Upper Dacia there is only one example of unknown provenance, brought to the Cluj Museum from Szegedin in Hungary (30). Dalmatia has yielded only three examples (115-117), all three from Lower Pannonia. It is noteworthy also that though quarries of sculptural clay existed in Pannonia, this material was not used in the manufacture of εἰκόνες of the Danubian Rider-Gods,[108] whereas it was largely employed in that of religious monuments connected with other cults practised in the province.[109] Thus there was no material reason to give such preference to lead, more expensive as it was, and for the manufacture of reliefs difficult to transport by reason of their weight and their fragility, since the slightest shock could efface or damage their sculptured scenes.

---

[102] S. Ljubić, *Vjesnik* IV (1882), p. 3; V. Hoffiller, *Vjesnik* VII (1903), p. 98ff.; VIII (1905), p. 198ff.; *ÖJh* XI (1908), p. 118ff.; J. Brunšmid, *Vjesnik* XIII (1913), p. 207ff. and especially V. Hoffiller, *Vjesnik* XI-XII (1911-1912), p. 16ff. (on the Zagreb Museum pieces). Cf. also Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 203 and 290, and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 55ff.

[103] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 45, n. 3, and p. 47; Brelich, *Aquincum*, p. 40, states that lead was a more expensive metal than bronze. The use of lead must therefore be explained by reasons internal to the cult.

[104] Tudor, *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961), pp. 331-332.

[105] Brelich, *op. cit.*, p. 140, n. 2; Oroszlán, *DolgSzeged* XIX (1943), p. 156; T. Nagy, *Gesch. Budapest* I, p. 113, n. 43; J. Fitz, *Intercisa* II, p. 385; Tudor, *Dacia* V (1961), N.S., p. 331, and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II p. 55ff.

[106] Ochsenschlager, *loc. cit.*

Thus, the only possible explanation must reside in the magic properties attributed to lead, the most sought after among metals of this kind, used likewise for the manufacture of *tabellae defixionum*. Lead was connected with Kronos, god of hate and vengeance. Consecrated to Saturn, it bred misfortunes and was considered also as the preferred metal of Death and the underworld deities.[110] Other indications reveal the magical and chthonic character of the Danubian tablets—their occult inscriptions, the number "three", the presence of Hecate, of Nemesis, of the monster Abraxas, and so on—all elements very frequent in their iconographic repertoire.

Before closing this section it must be mentioned also that a great number of representations of the Danubian Rider-Gods must undoubtedly have been engraved on wood. The fragility of this material explains their total disappearance. But we have one piece of evidence, the stone bas-relief found at Aequum (113), which is indubitably a copy of a model carved on wood, for the scenes are modelled as with the knife, whereas stone can only be carved with the chisel.[111]

---

[107] Tudor, *Dacia* N.S. III (1959), p. 415ff. A lead plaque from Drobeta (206) was probably imported from Sucidava.

[108] Will, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

[109] A. Alföldi, *Laureae Aquincenses* I, p. 312ff., and Kazarow, *Denkmäler* p. 5.

[110] Massoneau, *La magie dans l'Antiquité romaine*, Paris 1934, p. 115ff.; Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 118; Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften im griechischen Kult*, Giessen, 1910, p. 115ff. (*Religionsgesch. Vers. u. Vorarb.* Bd. IX).

Finally we must note that certain small metal pieces are provided with hasps (83, 140) which suggests that they were meant to be worn suspended (from the neck?), or with holes (208), again indicating that they were hung from some support. Noteworthy too is the care taken by the sculptors of these monuments to frame the different registers of the scenes represented on the borders of the plaques. They used different types of framing for the purpose: corded (37, 56, 57, 120, 125, 126, 137, 174), purled (140, 162, 173), with ovules (140), fully framed (6, 24, 33, 80, 97, 98, 102, 106, 125, 140, 154, 181, 200-205, etc.). The different types of column also constitute an essential element in the decoration of these reliefs (34, 41, 45, 55, 72, 73, 75, 81, 86, 106, 118, 127, 132-135, 148, 178, 179, 210, 228).

## 2. *The Form of the Monuments and their Marginal Decoration*

In the case of the Danubian Rider-Gods, unlike that of other cults, we have to do only with bas-reliefs and never with statuary groups sculptured in the round. In a single case (87) the Riders stand out freely (with daylight behind them) on the base of the plaque but the complete work retains its flat shape. The different forms of plaque do not serve for the establishment of a chronology or classification, any more than their figurative repertoire. Moreover, 39 of the pieces, finally lost or preserved only in fragmentary condition, do not allow a determination of their respective forms. These are generally terracotta or stone pieces lacking the upper part. Many of the fragments, however, are capable of reconstruction, and can therefore be included in the statistics and typology I give below.

---

[111] Abramić, *ÖJh* XVII (1914), Bibl., p. 148.

Starting from their external appearance, we can arrange these monuments in seven types:

*Type I.* These are of regular rectangular (quadrilateral) form, frequent among the reliefs in stone, metal, or terracotta. The largest number of pieces in this category are the stone sculptures from Dacia and the metal reliefs from the two Pannonias. The greater part of the plaques cast in lead have this quadrilateral form. The Type is represented by 99 monuments, that is, nearly half the whole collection. There is no correlation between it and the three principal classes of monument, nor has it any chronological significance. Their sculptural compositions have one to four registers, and may feature a single Rider or two Riders. (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 22, 25, 30, 34, 36, 37, 41, 46, 50-54, 67-69, 70, 71, 73-75, 88, 90, 92, 97, 98, 102, 106, 107, 114, 117, 123, 124, 127-134, 141-145, 146, 149, 150, 155, 156, 163-170, 173, 174, 176, 180, 182-186, 198, 202-204, 210, 211, 214-215, 217-220, 223-225).

*Type II.* This is a round-topped stele with a single, principal field of composition frequent in Dacia (9 pieces) and Moesia (12 pieces). A further development was the frieze added to the base and the astral symbols placed above the Riders. A total of 29 pieces of this type, all in stone, are known (1, 18, 20, 24, 28, 33, 47, 49, 58, 59, 64-66, 76, 79, 85, 91, 103-105, 108, 109, 112, 113, 147, 154, 175, 200). A very important point is that this form is specially frequent among the single Rider monuments, in other words among the most ancient (1, 33, 47, 58, 59, 79, 108, 260). But reliefs of similar shape are likewise very frequent in Mithraic iconography[112] and in that of the Thracian Rider,[113] and even in the case of other reliefs brought to light in Dacia, Moesia, and Thrace. The arched line of their top margin may be an allusion to the vault of heaven or to that of the grotto.[114] Their analogies with the Mithraic and Thracian Rider reliefs show that they were manufactured in the same workshops by the stone-workers of the lower Danube basin.[115] Such workshops, serving different cults with bas-reliefs supplied to order, have been recorded at Apulum, where two Mithraic reliefs (Vermaseren CIMRM 2000, 2006) have the same appearance as a relief of the Danubian Rider (1). We note that often the curved line of the upper margin is replaced by a vault included inside the frame and resting on columns in the plaques of Pannonian origin (127, 132, 133), or by a simple archway in the stone monuments (155, 156, 176). But in both these cases the curved line symbolizes the vault of heaven, assimilated to the grotto where the cult was performed, or just as in the Mithraic monuments it may represent an "architectural cave", a symbolic replica of the cosmos.[116]

---

[112] Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 1. Cf. Vermaseren, *Mithras*, pp. 54 and 152.

[113] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, Tafelband, *passim.*

[114] Tudor, *ED* VIII, p. 203. Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium*, p. 45, considers that: "It is possible that the Danubian Horsemen cult, like the cult of Mithra, was practised in secret grottos, caves, or caverns of natural or artificial construction." Porphyrius, *De antro nympharum*, states that Mithras was wor-

*Type III.* These have the form of an *aedicula,* distinguished by its triangular pediment. They are characteristic of Lower Dacia (35, 42, 43, 45, 206) and the neighbouring region of Lower Moesia (72, 77, 81, 83, 99), making with the single example from Upper Moesia (55), from Viminacium, still close, that is, to southern Dacia, a total of 11 pieces. With two exceptions (55, 77) all these pieces are cast in lead and most of them come from the same workshop. This type of religious monument is rare in the Mithraic repertoire (Vermaseren CIMRM 1345, 1919, 2018, 2037, 2216, 2305), because the angular form of its upper part hardly conforms to the grotto image. In contrast it does recall the triangular plaques dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus.[117] The aedicule and its pediment might be connected with the facade of a possible cult building (temple or chapel) devoted to the Danubian Rider-Gods. In only two cases (quadrilateral

---

shipped in a natural grotto (αὐτοφυὲς σπήλαιον), which symbolized the heavens (εἰκών τοῦ κόσμοῦ), cf. also Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 33.

[115] The form, the stone, the technique, the artistic style, the clothing, etc. of the Danubian Rider bas-reliefs and the Mithraic pieces are very similar. This similarity is evidence of common workshops. The observation was made already by Saxl, *Mithras*, p. 35f., who also emphasizes the artistic superiority of the Danubian plaques over the Mithraic monuments.

[116] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, pp. 8 and 49.

[117] Merlat, *op. cit., passim.* For the Thracian Rider monuments cf. Kazarow, *op. cit.*, II, pl. XXII, 136; XXV, 146; XXVI, 131, 152; XXXI, 182, 185; XXXV, 207; XXXVII, 219, 221, etc.

plaques) the pediment is situated inside the sculptured field, framed in an architectural system resting on columns (73, 210).

*Type IV.* These have the *aedicula* in a form characteristic of the Danubian Rider monuments but completely absent from the Mithras catalogue, or from those of Jupiter Dolichenus and others. Apart from these, it appears only, very tentatively, in two of the Thracian Rider reliefs.[118] The type seems to have been confined exclusively to the lead plaques (10 pieces). We note its great frequency in Lower Pannonia (125, 126, 135, 136, 137, 138, 221, 224), from where it was imported into Lower Dacia (208), Upper Moesia (70, 211), Upper Pannonia (169, 170), and Dalmatia (110, 115). Its upper part is in the form of an *aedicula* flanked by two acroteria, the three projections being filled with celestial symbols or occupied by a fish. Evidently the origin of these reliefs must be looked for in the metal workshops of Lower Pannonia, which borrowed the form from votive or funerary stone monuments.

*Type V.* This is the stone or lead roundel, perfectly circular in form and of varied dimensions. Of the eight pieces known from Dacia, four are of marble (3, 26, 27, 205) and only two of lead (44, 48). Like other metal Danubian Rider monuments, the lead pieces were found close to the river. The three pieces from Moesia also (56, 57, 80) were found near the Danube. A single piece from Italy (178) and one from Great Britain (181) can be considered as imported. It must be emphasized that of the 27 perfectly circular roundels so far known 16 were discovered in the two Pannonias, of which four (118, 148, 152, 161) are carved in stone and all the rest cast in lead (120, 121, 139, 140, 151, 162, 171, 172, 212, 213, 216, 222). The Pannonian lead roundels were manufactured in the same workshops as the rectangular lead plaques. We note that the single Danubian Rider is not found in any of these roundels, an indication of their late date. Kazarow's catalogue of the Thracian Rider monuments shows this form to have been completely absent from them, as are circular, ovoidal, or ellipsoidal forms in general. Moreover, it is very rarely found among Mithraic monuments, being confined to some stone examples (Vermaseren *CIMRM* II, 1415, 1815, 1861, 2187,

---

[118] Kazarow, *op. cit.*, nr. 331 = pl. XXXII, 187 and 762 = pl. LXV, 383.

2240) and of course engraved gems (ibid. II 2354, 2355, 2361-2367).[119] This suggests that the type was specific to the lower Danube and to the iconography of the Danubian Riders. It must be added, too, that in certain cases, these roundels were inserted in monuments of another form (115, 125, 126, 209). As for the smaller metallic pieces, they must have been worn on their persons by the votaries of the cult who credited them with magical and prophylactic powers.

*Type VI.* These are confined to stone roundels of ovoid form discovered in Lower Moesia (78, 86), Lower Pannonia (119), and Upper Pannonia (153, 160). Included in the group also are two engraved gems of unknown provenance (194, 195). The ovoid form is entirely lacking from the Thracian Rider and Mithras cults.

*Type VII.* These are distinguished by the ellipsoidal form appropriate to engraved gems (11 pieces), to which it is exclusively confined. All the examples of this type are of unknown provenance (187-193, 228).

There remain 35 pieces to which no definite form can be assigned owing to their fragmentary condition (2, 4, 5, 17, 21, 23, 29, 31, 32, 38, 39, 40, 62, 63, 82, 84, 87, 89, 93, 94, 95, 96, 100, 101, 111, 122, 146, 157, 158, 159, 177, 179, 201, 217, 226, 227) or which are lost (12-14).

We observe that in comparison with other groups of cultic bas-reliefs, all equally important and numerous (Mithras, the Thracian Rider, Jupiter Dolichenus, etc.), current in the middle and lower Danube basin, the pieces dedicated to the Danubian Rider-Gods are the most varied and characteristic in their forms. A good number of these are directly related to the religious nature of these monuments.

The sculptural repertoire of the stone reliefs is framed in the usual marginal border-line joined by the horizontal interior border-lines separating the different panels or registers. We note that this border-line is not so wide at the base as in other monuments, since the respective surfaces were never intended for inscriptions. In the quadrilateral lead plaques (Types I and II), the frame is given by small pillars supporting the pediments and arranged either one on either side or in pairs (34, 35, 36, 45, 55, 72-75, 81, 127, 132, 133, 135).[120] Less frequently on these lead plaques, the border-line is of corded type (115, 125, 137, 173). The same corded border-line is found in some of the lead roundels (12, 162, 171), on which it may also be transformed into a line of ovoli (140).

---

[119] This type corresponds with the IVth type of Mithraic monuments according to Campbell's classification, *MithrIcon,* p. 1ff., and Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 1128, 1415, 1472, 1475, 1861, 2187, 2202, 2246.

The following table shows the distribution of the seven Types by provinces:

| *Province* | *Type I* □ | *Type II* ∩ | *Type III* ⌂ | *Type IV* ⊓ | *Type V* ○ | *Type VI* 0 | *Type VII* ⬭ | *Frag-ments of indeter-minate form* | *Vanished monu-ments of unknown form* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Upper Dacia | 16 | 6 | – | – | 3 | – | – | 9 | 3 |
| 2. Lower Dacia | 6 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | – | – | 6 | – |
| 3. Upper Moesia | 11 | 6 | 1 | – | 2 | – | – | 4 | – |
| 4. Lower Moesia | 9 | 6 | 5 | – | 1 | 2 | – | 10 | – |
| 5. Thrace | – | 2 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 6. Dalmatia | 5 | 4 | – | 2 | – | – | – | 1 | – |
| 7. Lower Pannonia | 26 | – | – | 7 | 10 | 1 | – | 3 | – |
| 8. Upper Pannonia | 12 | 2 | – | – | 6 | 2 | – | 3 | – |
| 9. Noricum | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 10. Italy | 2 | 4 | – | – | 1 | – | – | 2 | – |
| 11. Gaul | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 12. Great Britain | – | – | – | – | 1 | – | – | – | – |
| 13. Provenance unknown | 5 | – | – | – | – | 2 | 11 | – | – |
| *Total* | 94 | 33 | 11 | 10 | 27 | 7 | 11 | 38 | 3 |

---

[120] Cumont, *MMM* I, 232, considers the artistic theme of the vault or *tympanum* with columns as of oriental origin. It is found at Dura-Europos (Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 40, and Rostovtseff, *MdI* 49, 1934, p. 187, pl. 12). But for the Danubian tablets the theme comes from the funerary art of Noricum and Pannonia, where the epitaph is often framed by colonnettes; cf. A. Schober, *Die römischen Grabsteine von Noricum und Pannonien*, Vienna 1923, nos. 185 (Scarabantia); 192 (Brigetio); 266 (Vindobona); 55 and 72 (Savaria); 116 (Poetovio); 55 (Carnuntum) etc.; and S. Ferri, *Motivi ornamentali nell'arte del medio e basso Danubio*, Rome 1933, figs. 4, 14, 37, 41 (Aquincum); 27, 55, 56 (Belgrade), 78, 36, etc. The vault with columns, in a manner almost identical with the vault of the Danubian lead plaques, is

### 3. *The Size of the Monuments*

The bas-reliefs sacred to the Danubian Rider-Gods are in general, compared with the votive monuments of other cults, of modest proportions, and this made them easy to transport. As we should expect, the smallest are the 13 engraved gems, meant to be set in finger-rings. After them come some lead roundels 3 cm. (44) or 6-8 cm. in diameter (48, 56, 57, 72, 140), likewise easily worn on the person as phylacteries or amulets in a small cloth or leather bag. The biggest pieces are those in stone, and of these in particular two marbles of 0.375 × 0.300 × 0.050 m. and 0.377 × 0.300 × 0.050 m., the first from Dacia (1), the other from Lower Moesia (71). There cannot be a shadow of doubt that reliefs as heavy as these could only have served as permanent fixtures in some place reserved for the cult. We cannot imagine them having been carried in processions. According to Will, they must have been central images occupying the place of honour inside a sanctuary. The pieces of smaller dimensions must have fulfilled a votive function in temples, chapels, *lararia*. Their small size together with the absence of statuary from their repertoire reveals the extremely secret nature of the cult. In this connection we note that in their final stage of development the monuments become smaller and smaller, being transformed into roundels or plaques of type 137, all cast in lead—the preferred metal of magicians and practitioners of the occult. At the same time some part may well also have been played by the need to economize in the use of a metal which was tending to become rarer, a good reason to reduce the size of the monuments.

---

found on Pannonian funeral stelae, cf. S. Ferri, *Annuario del Cuerpo Facultativo de Archiveros y Bibliotecarios*, cf. *Arqueólogos* II (1934), Madrid, abstract pp. 12-14, fig. 1-2, and Ferri, *Arte romana sul Danubio*, Milan 1934, pp. 215ff. and 243ff. In Dacia the theme is very rare, cf. Gr. Florescu, *ED* IV, nos. 28, 34-37. Will's assertion, *Rel. cult.*, p. 30, that the Danubian stone reliefs are never provided with an architectural frame, is invalidated by the monuments nos. 147 and 148.

### 4. *Polychromy of Certain Stone Monuments*

An important complementary part must have been played by polychromy in rendering the sculptural repertoire of the stone reliefs. It is attested by the numerous traces of paint found on the bas-reliefs, even though the painting is far from being preserved in a satisfactory state. In the Danube valley atmospheric agents have had a disastrous effect on the painting of these carved "pictures" (18, 24, 25, 78, 97, 114, 149, 153, 154, 205). Only one Pannonian oval roundel in marble has conserved its painting in good condition (153). Examination shows that painting was used to emphasize the stars, the harness and bits of the horses, the belts (?) worn by the Riders, and so on. We note for instance that important elements of this bas-relief are heavily painted in deep brown such as the modius on the goddess's head, the fish on the table, snakes behind and above the Riders, the cantharus, the lion who accompanies the left-hand Rider in the fight, the crater, and the fourfold spirals of the colonnettes. Once the painting has been effaced the bas-reliefs show many bare spaces in their composition, as can be seen in such examples as 20, 24, 47, 50, 62, 76, 78, 88, 113, 160, 205, etc.. This may even be an obstacle to our understanding of the real content of certain pieces in which the figurative details were completed with paint.

The preferred colours in this painting were a red and a yellowish tint. These are found in the clothes of the deities, their ornaments, the harness, the stars, the snakes, the outlines of the faces, etc. Polychromy was unsuitable for the metal pieces, while those in terracotta have lost their paint. The polychromic technique is revealed especially by other monuments of a religious or funerary character frequent in the middle and lower Danube basin.[121] It seems to have originated in the Orient, where it was widely employed.[122] The use of colour was found desirable in the stone plaques of the Danubian Rider-Gods because of the numerous details impossible to render with the chisel and because they are full of so many scenes found less frequently in similar pieces used in other cults. Polychromy, moreover, had the advantage of giving a heightened significance to certain elements of the repertoire (the sky, the stars, the adornments of the gods, etc.).

---

[121] For the Thracian Rider: Seure, *RÉA* XXVI (1923/4), p. 48; Kazarow, *PWRE*, Suppl. III, col. 1133, and *Denkmäler*, p. 4. For the Mithraic bas-reliefs cf. Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 217, and Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, pp. 406 and 414 (s.v. *colour* and *painting*).

[122] Rostovtseff, *Mitt. deut. arch. Inst.*, 49 (1934), p. 186, where the Mithraeum of Dura-Europos is referred to.

### 5. *The Absence of Votive Inscriptions*

Only eight of the Danubian Rider monuments known up to the present are provided with inscriptions, seven of which are in Greek characters (29, 101, 188, 194, 189, 191, 192) and one in characters which appear to be Latin (53). But not one of these inscriptions has a votive character giving any insight into the nature of the respective deities or helping us to discover their name. A good number of the monuments carved in stone have a large section at the base which could have served as the panel for an inscription, but the inscription itself is lacking (89, 94, 155, 182, etc.). Among the few existing inscriptions only three have been deciphered satisfactorily, but without revealing the names of the deities concerned.

One of the bas-reliefs (29 d) has a raised band separating the two registers on which the following words have been engraved:

Γέρμανος ἐποίησεν

This can only be a signature of the stone-carver who made the monument. His name betrays the Hellenized alien: Germanus —Γέρμανος—being a widespread cognomen in the Roman Empire, particularly among the veterans.

One engraved gem has the inscription ΛΕΩΝ incised round the image of the lion (192 B). The reversed script shows that the stone, mounted in a ring, was meant to be used as a seal. The title λέων designated a certain grade in the hierarchy of the Danubian Rider mysteries (cf. below, p. 254). What we have, then, in this case is a magical object serving also as a *tessera* indicating the rank of its owner in the occult community of the votaries of these gods. The lion, as an emblem of occult forces (fire, force, vigour, etc.), no doubt also served as a prophylactic for its possessor.

If it is really the reverse of the engraved gem from the Odescalchi collection (189) which Bartoli's drawing reproduces (pl. XXXII), as Giglioli[123] supposes, then around the monster Abraxas we can read the following inscription: 'Ιαω, 'Αδωναί, Μιχαήλ, Κενῆ (?). The appearance of the terrible cockatrice on another engraved gem belonging without any doubt to the category of Danubian monuments (228, B) seems to reinforce Giglioli's hypothesis that the preceding example must be counted among the Basilidean gems, where the names of these deities are usual (see below, p. 179). In any case this inscription does nothing to solve the puzzle of the names of the Danubian Rider-Gods, in view of its frequent occurrence among magical intaglios. On the obverse of the same Odescalchi gem (189), the inscription KIANO F engraved above the Danubian deities, with the last letter after a space, could suggest the reading 'Kiano f(ecit?). It would then be once more the graver's name, but given an altogether unusual prominence.[124] As for the word engraved beneath the goddess, in reversed Greek characters—∇IAΔИC—this remains illegible, although certain authors have connected it with the name of Diana.[125]

One of the inscriptions on these monuments, a *graffito* scrawled on the reverse of a marble plaque (101), in Greek characters: MONTHΔΠ is as incomprehensible as the lettering on the three engraved gems (189, 191, 194). A number of hypotheses have been put forward regarding magical cryptograms of this kind, but possibilities of deciphering them are rare.[126] For the present we can only consider them as belonging to the category of apotropaic epigraphs, mystical and magical, impossible to interpret in the present state of our knowledge.

In view of the great number of the Danubian monuments, the absence of votive inscriptions cannot be simply attributed to chance. They must undoubtedly be divinities with *nomina arcana,* in other words it was forbidden to pronounce or publish their names.[127] That does not in any way mean that the Danubian Rider cult was a *religio illicita,* since its sculptural representations have been found deposited in public places (camps, cities, *villae,* etc.), perhaps even reserved for the cult. The preference for ἄσημα ὀνόματα constitutes one of the "characteristic" features of religious syncretism, which we also find to some extent among other oriental religions of the second to fourth centuries.[128]

---

[123] Giglioli, *ArchClas* III (1951), p. 202 and pl. L, 2.

[124] A. Dumont, *Inscr. et monum. figurés de la Thrace*, Paris 1877, p. 20, no. 43.

[125] Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1903, p. 364, and Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 12.

[126] Fr. Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, Berlin 1905 (coll. ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ, VII).

It follows that in our present state of research and of archaeological discovery the real names of the three great principal deities figuring in the Danubian plaques remain completely unknown to us. The different appellations which have been tentatively attributed to them are nothing but mere hypotheses. In an age of great expansion of religious and iconographic syncretism, the mutual borrowing of religious symbols and the sculptural diagrams representing them among various cults of similar content is of common occurrence. None the less, this does not permit us to confuse the Danubian Rider-Gods with other deities or to call them indiscriminately Thracian Riders, Thraco-Mithraic Riders, Cabiri, Dioscuri, and the like. The only name acceptable for the moment remains that of Danubian Riders, tied to the region of the lower Danube basin where their religion flourished.

## 6. *Purposes Served by the Monuments*

In the absence of any more precise data on the real nature of these monuments, the problem has been tackled and discussed at length from such criteria as are available, like the study of the forms and dimensions of the pieces, the content of the scenes figuring in their repertoire,[129] and so on. Undoubtedly a good number of the medallions or small plaques did duty as amulets hung from the neck, as is shown by the fact that some of them are provided with hasps (83, 139, 140, 172). Other pieces, all of small size and easily portable, could have served the same prophylactic and magical uses, kept in wooden frames or little leather or cloth bags. The big stone pieces and the heavier metal plaques must have been deposited in a fixed spot, as votive objects in public or private buildings reserved for the cult. For it is difficult to suppose that the lead plaques weighing about 175 gr. could have been suspended from the neck (127, 132, 133, 135). All the more if the roundels of this metal, but not weighing more than 80 gr., were worn, only in certain circumstances, suspended in bags from the neck and serving, like those known in the Sabazius and Cybele cults, as pectorals. Ornamented with reliefs, they were worn by priests and worshippers of the Danubian Rider-Gods. As for the combination of several scenes, or in other words, multiple pictures on a single cultic relief, this must have been inspired by provincial and popular usage.

---

[127] Hampel, *loc. cit.*; Ziehen, *loc. cit.*, Buday, *DolgSzeged,* 1928, p. 146, and Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 207. Buday's hypothesis, that all the worshippers of the Danubian Riders were illiterate, is invalidated by Monument 29 (unknown to him). It was Vasile Pârvan, *CRAI,* 1926, p. 92, who for the first time gave the name *Danubian Riders* (or Rider-Gods) to our gods, a title accepted also by me and today generally adopted (cf. D. Tudor, *I Cavalieri danubiani, ED* VII).

[128] Dieterich, *Mithraslit,*. p. 34ff.

The engraved gems set in rings, on the other hand, must have combined more than one function. On the one hand, they were thought to be endowed with occult powers, magical and prophylactic, on the other they served as seals and *tesserae*, in the celebration of the mysteries. There is also the category of gems engraved on both sides (188, 191, 192, 193, 194, 228), which can hardly have been set in rings, concealing one of the engraved faces. It will be noted at the same time that these engraved gems are the very ones exhibiting the most complex range of magical prophylactic elements. These in all probability must have been kept in little boxes or bags, from which they could easily be taken out and shown by their owner, especially in the case of those engraved with the emblem of the rank he held in the hierarchy of the mysteries (191, B; 192, B).

---

[129] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 239, was inclined to believe that the bas-reliefs in stone were embedded in the walls of the *lararia*; the engraved gems served as seals, while the medallions hung from the neck were prophylactic objects; cf. also Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1903, p. 364; Dölger, *IXΘYC* II, p. 435, and Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 46. The Thracian Rider reliefs were also fixed on the inner walls of houses, cf. Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 4ff.

## 7. *Arrangement of Scenes on the Monuments*

The problem of reducing the repertoire of the Danubian bas-reliefs to some kind of order was not one which troubled all the craftsmen working on them. They did not always bother about the logical and orderly arrangement of scenes, symbols, and cult objects which they had to reproduce. We could equally well apply to them Campbell's remark[130] about the Mithraic reliefs, that this religion "was not completely uniform in its selection or use of art forms, nor was it more uniform in its cosmology, theology, or rites." What did matter, on the other hand, was the fact established by Will that, in comparison with other cultic reliefs brought to light in the Danubian region, those of the Danubian Riders were arranged much more systematically, both iconographically speaking and from the religious point of view. In many cases, however, historical succession was disregarded and we observe a mixture of gods, emblems, and cult objects of secondary importance. The fact is especially noticeable in the lead medallions of the final phase of this religion.

The pictures are arranged in horizontal registers, separated by border-lines more prominent in the case of the stone pieces, and scarcely visible or altogether absent in the metal ones. This method of arrangement is specific to the Mithraic monuments of Dacia,[131] whereas in the older provinces there is a preference for a vertical arrangement around the central image of Mithras Tauroktonos.[132] In the Danubian Rider reliefs, however, the horizontal order of narration continues its logical succession even when the composition of the scenes is disturbed or broken by architectural elements, such as the simple vault (127, 132, 133), the double vault (34, 75), the facades of temple form (42, 45, 55, 72, 73, 81, 99, 210, 228), and so on.

This horizontal display of the scenes peculiar to the Danubian monuments was determined by the expansion of their central picture, representing the three great gods, into a wider and flatter rectangle. But as the moment approaches for the final disappearance of the cult, in the 3rd to 4th centuries, we note a decline in the artistic taste which had influenced the harmonious ordering of the repertoire in its earliest stages. There are numerous examples which exhibit a disorderly arrangement of the different scenes (44, 48, 57, 83, 120, 125, 137, 140, 151, 162, 171).

---

[130] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 4.

[131] Vermaseren, *CIMRM*, II 1935, 1958, 1972, 1975, 2000, 2036, 2038, 2044, 2048, 2051, 2052, 2159, 2171, etc.

[132] *Ibid.*, 2198, 2202, 2237, 2241, 2292, 2338, etc. The grotto vault (natural, artificial, architectural, etc.) on the Mithras bas-reliefs determined the circular or vertical arrangement of the secondary scenes, cf. Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 6ff.

Generally speaking, it is the lead roundels and the engraved gems which show the least regard for any systematic arrangement of the respective scenes in horizontal strips. This was no doubt due to their circular or oval form, but also because most of them date from the period of decadence of Roman provincial art, coinciding as it did with the decline of the cult itself.

The question of the systematic ordering of the scenes from the repertoire assumes particular importance for the craftsmen concerned during the phase when the cult, under the influence of syncretism, added to its iconography numerous secondary deities and new symbols and cult objects. At the outset, in fact, only one Rider and one Goddess were worshipped as principal deities. At this period the monuments concerned generally had no more than one or two registers (1, 2, 17, 45, 46, 58, 59, 64, 77, 79, 174), with three or four registers only in certain instances (9, 16, 29, 55, 106, 107, 183, 200, 202, 203). Most of the monuments listed in the two principal categories A and B had three registers, and of these three it was the centre one which occupied most space. The number three is not due to chance. The deities, the symbols, the objects depicted in the three registers correspond to the three worlds, celestial, terrestrial, and chthonic—a tripartite division characteristic of the Danubian Rider religion, as Chapouthier has emphasized.[133]

The central panel is occupied at first by two, later by three principal deities with their attendants and their fallen enemies trampled under the horses' hooves. The scene is terrestrial, mythical. The details of this heroic myth are unknown to us, but its meaning is the kernel of the Danubian Rider religion and of the art it inspired. The equivalent of this scene in Mithraic sculpture is the moment of sacrifice of the bull and in the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus the apotheosis of the god upright on the bull. All the other scenes are subordinate to that depicting the Goddess and the two Rider-Gods and take place round them. Above the central register reserved for the fundamental myth is placed the panel assigned to the celestial world with its deities (Sol, Luna, the Stars, birds, solar emblems, and so on). Finally, the bottom panel depicts scenes from the mysteries, eschatological in character, underworld symbols, and cult objects. Its eschatological character points the way to the world of shades.

---

[133] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 292, also cites the Brundisium discus, cf. K. Kerényi, *AÉrt*, 1930, p. 74ff.

In comparison with the cultic monuments created by other religions, the Danubian plaques show a clear superiority in their artistic, historical, religious, and mystical presentation. The Mithraic repertoire is stereotyped, grouped around Mithras as bull-slayer and limited to scenes representing the myth of this deity. The pyramidal arrangement of the reliefs dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus gave no opportunity for the representation of scenes of religious history. All it could allow was reduced to symbols, cult objects, and attendant divinities. As for the Sabazius sculptures, they are distinguished by the disorderly mass of symbols and cult objects such as we see on the celebrated Copenhagen bronze relief, in this sense typical.[134]

## 8. *Chronology*

The dating of the Danubian Rider plaques is a real problem, owing to the absence of votive inscriptions, or of sculptural details which can be assigned to a definite epoch. Added to this is the poverty of stratigraphic evidence in the case of monuments brought to light by archaeological excavations.

Thinking that all these pieces, even those found elsewhere, were manufactured in Dacia, Antonescu[135] dates them en bloc to the

[134] Blickenberg, *Sabazios*, pl. 2, and Will, *Rel. cult.*, pl. III.

[135] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 70ff., established two periods when the cult flourished—under the Antonines and under the Severi.

period of Roman rule north of the Danube. In Hampel's opinion[136] none of the Danubian Rider reliefs can go back further than the second century of our epoch and the religion itself must have disappeared during the reign of Constantine the Great. It would have reached its peak—always according to Hampel—during the period of Sol Invictus, that is to say the last decades of the third century, in particular under Aurelian and Probus, the period to which he assigns the Pannonian lead plaques (125, 126, 127, 132, 133, 135, 137, 140, etc.). His chief argument in favour of this dating is the presence of the theme "Sol in the Four-Horse Chariot", likewise frequent on the coins issued by the Illyrian emperors. Buday,[137] who makes the mistake of mixing up the Danubian Rider monuments with those of the Thracian Rider and the Cabiro-Dioscuri, puts their origin back to the fourth century B.C. He then attempts to place all the finds of this type made in the Danubian basin chronologically within the first four centuries of the Christian era.

A more appropriate hypothesis was put forward by Rostovtseff[138] concerning both chronology and classification of the Danubian plaques. He groups them in three categories in chronological succession:

(a) Class 1 comprises the monuments with a single Rider, which he dates to the end of the first century A.D. and the first half of the second.

(b) Class 2 comprises most of the carefully made lead plaques. The greater number of these, according to Rostovtseff, belong to the second century, with certain "decadent" extensions into the third (127, 132, 133, 135). It was in this period, he thinks, that the Danubian Rider cult must have had its fullest flowering.

(c) Rostovtseff's Class 3 comprises solely the bas-reliefs in stone (with two Riders), coarsely executed and with the respective scenes arranged in two registers. He dates all these monuments to the third century.

---

[136] Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 350ff.; Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 150, accepts this chronology and notices also that the Syrian goddess Atargatis (identified with the Great Goddess of the Danubian tablets) makes her appearance in Dacia at the same period.

[137] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 127.

[138] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 4ff.

As I have already said, I do indeed find Rostovtseff's chronology acceptable. But it needs certain modifications to adapt it to the latest discoveries. First of all, there is a complete lack of evidence sufficient to place the birth of the sculpture peculiar to this cult near the end of the first century A.D. But there is not the shadow of a doubt that general specialist opinion tends to consider the single-Rider monuments as most ancient.[139]

By reference to the regional statistics of this class we can establish the country of origin of the first representations of the Danubian Rider cult. The region where the first single-Rider monuments appeared provides the key to the problem in respect of antiquity, ethnical origin, and later development of the cult. Some help in the solution of the problem, we find, is given by an analysis of the details offered by the sculptures in question. Let us proceed accordingly.

The number of pieces of Class A, with a single Rider, at present totals 31, of which 17 *were found in Dacia* (1, 2, 9, 10, 14-17, 29, 33, 40, 45, 46, 200-203), 8 in Moesia (55, 58, 59, 64, 77, 79, 90, 232), 4 in Dalmatia (106-108, 110), and 2 of undetermined provenance (174, 183) but with a good chance of having also come from Dacia. The other three Danubian provinces—Pannonia, Noricum, and Thrace—have not hitherto yielded a single specimen of Class A (single Rider). It follows that Dacia has provided more than half the single-Rider plaques (two thirds!). Those found in the two Moesias also come from the near neighbourhood of the Dacian bank of the Danube, while the Dalmatian plaques show great resemblance to those of

---

[139] Tudor *ED* VII, p. 200ff. and VIII, p. 445ff. On the importance of the territorial distribution of finds in determining the antiquity of a pagan religion, see Ch. Picard, *RHR*, CL (1956), p. 4. The writers are unanimous in recognizing the bas-reliefs with one Rider as being the most ancient monuments of our cult: Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 5; Kazarow, *Germania* 19 (1935), p. 315; Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 208; *Dacia*, N.S. (1961), p. 324; *Das Altertum* 8 (1962), p. 236; Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 68. Will (*Rel. cult.*, p. 89) dates the tablets from the 2nd-3rd centuries; but none the less he proposes "that the Danubian monuments evolved before the imperial age, and even more precisely before the establishment of the province of Dacia" (cf. also p. 85ff).

Dacia. It is from Dacia, then, that the cult must have spread.[140] As for the single-Rider plaques found in Moesia, their repertoire perfectly resembles that of the Dacian reliefs, proving that they were manufactured in the same period.

It is quite natural to consider as the country of origin of the sculptural products of this cult that region which has yielded the oldest and most numerous monuments of this class, as is the case with Dacia. But this country only became a Roman province after Trajan's Dacian wars (101-102 and 105-106), so that we cannot speak of the beginning of Danubian Rider sculpture until after this date. We find the iconographic elements of the cult in the first half of the second century on a relief from Apulum (1), which shows all the characteristics of Roman provincial sculpture of the Age of the Antonines. The same monument reveals significant religious and artistic elements borrowed from the sculpture of the Thracian Rider, which must have inspired the makers of the plaques of the first class (A), with a single Rider.

The very small number of single-Rider reliefs shows us that this class of monuments was in existence for only a brief period. At the latest by the second half of the second century category B had already been adopted, with two Riders flanking a goddess. But the period of widest diffusion of the two-Rider sculptures was the third century, in its first half especially, although from certain stylistic and artistic details we can date some of the Pannonian lead roundels (139, 140, 172) to the fourth century. The evidence for this is furnished especially by the clothing of the deities, robes pleated in very prominent stripes superimposed on the vertical. Another detail characteristic of this late period is the dressing of the hair in small curls framing the forehead in a clean line, and the plumpness of the cheeks.

The most numerous and most characteristic from the viewpoint of a relative chronology are certain lead plaques executed with quite particular care (127, 132, 133, 135). They were assigned by Rostovtseff to the second century, but this dating is contradicted by certain stylistic peculiarities. Attentive study of the well-preserved examples in the collections of the museums of Zagreb and Budapest has strengthened my conviction that they cannot belong to the Age of the Antonines. They are undoubtedly of later date.[141] The goddess's hair style, as represented on these plaques, is composed of fine waves laid close to the head as if by a hairnet, with two locks taken round behind the ears and forward on to the cheeks. This coiffure is specific to the women of the first half of the third century A.D., and frequent among the Syrian empresses such as Julia Domna, Julia Maesa, and Julia Mamaea.

---

[140] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 198.

For the classification of the Pannonian lead plaques, then, I propose the following chronology: A first category, on which the columns have smooth shafts (127, 132), goes back to the age of the Severi. These are pieces executed with a great deal of taste. Then come the pieces with the column shafts twisted (133), and these can be dated somewhere around the years 240-270. They are cast none too carefully but observe the same lay-out as the preceding.

Another valuable dating element is the *draco* banner, carried by one of the Riders (36, 42, 43, 48, 49, 56, 72-75, 104, 149, 188, 195, 206, 228). It has never been met with in the single-Rider plaques. It is a military ensign which was not adopted by the Roman army till the beginning of the third century, so that the plaques concerned can likewise be dated after that (cf. below, p. 82).

A still closer, extremely important dating for the final stage of the Danubian Rider cult is that suggested by the lead plaque brought to light by the author of these pages at Sucidava (208). It forms part of a series of identical plaques found in the two Pannonias (137, 138, 139, 170), from where it must also have been imported to Sucidava. I found it there at the oldest Roman level of the Romano-Byzantine citadel, belonging to a context dated by its bronze coins from Aurelian to Constantine the Great. Thus the plaque itself can be assigned to the first two decades of the fourth century, so that we can be sure that the Danubian Rider cult lasted till then in the Danube valley.

---

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 208. Merlat, *Jup. Dol.*, p. 17, proposes the same chronology for the Dolichenian monuments (from Hadrian to the beginning of the 4th century).

From their analogies with this last piece (form of *aedicula*, with stylistic elements summarily executed and arranged in disorderly fashion, etc.), we can assign certain pieces in the form of an *aedicula* with acroteria and certain lead roundels to the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth (70, 115, 125, 126, 135, 136, 159, 162, 171, 208, 212, 213, 216, 222).

We may thus conclude, at the present stage of archaeological discovery, that the sculptural expression of the Danubian Rider cult took shape in Dacia during the first half of the second century and that its last monuments capable of being dated belong to the first two decades of the fourth century. Towards the middle of the third century there occurs a marked decline of the cult, both from an artistic and religious point of view and in respect of its geographical spread. We can easily explain this phenomenon by reference to the fact that the area of diffusion was concentrated in the lower Danube basin with its principal focus in Dacia, a Roman province which as such disappeared in 271. It can thus be stated that the abandonment of Dacia was a mortal blow for the Danubian Rider cult, since it was there, north of the Danube, that it was born and had its fullest flowering, and from there that it spread to the neighbouring provinces.

We find the same process of decline in the Mithras cult in the region of the Lower Danube beginning in the third century,[142] but that could in no way have affected the religion of the Iranian god to the same extent, for it was widely diffused in almost all the provinces of the Roman Empire. The frequent Carpic, Gothic, and Sarmatian invasions destroyed quite a number of Roman camps, towns, and villages which had only just begun to flourish in the valley of the lower and middle Danube. On the other hand, in the third century the number of oriental elements diminished in the Danubian garrisons, giving place to Germanic elements who brought their own cults with them. Little by little the Danubian Rider cult disappeared, especially after Pannonia too had experienced the ravages of Barbarian invasions. Moreover, when the struggle between Christianity and the allied oriental religions, with the cult of Mithras at their head, broke out in the fourth century, that of the Danubian Rider-Gods no longer had much significance.

---

[142] Cumont, *Myst. Mithra*, p. 209, and Wüst, *PWRE*, XV, col. 2148.

## D. Classification of the Monuments

### *Typological and Chronological Development*

The classification of the Danubian plaques is one of the principal problems tackled by those who have devoted themselves to the study of this religion. For in the absence of inscriptions and other characteristic archaeological evidence, their classification offers us some chance of following their historical, religious, and artistic development. The variety of forms in which these plaques occur, the ordering and content of the registers, have given rise to a number of criteria and hypotheses of classification, varying according to the point of view peculiar to each investigator.[143] Three criteria above all have been used for their classification: typology, the religious element, and the artistic element (*"Kulturgeschichtlich"* or *"Kunstgeschichtlich"*).

While recognizing the difficulty of obtaining an ideal classification, Dölger[144] arranges the Danubian plaques in five categories, according to the different functions assigned to the fish in their repertoire. But of course Dölger's classification is of value only for the problems directly connected with his concerns, without solving the essential problem.

A much wider classification was proposed by Buday,[145] who distinguishes nine categories of monuments (A-I) according to the positioning of the two Riders in the ensemble.[146] But he ends up by totally disregarding these criteria and includes in his first three categories monuments alien to the Danubian Rider cult, which deprives his attempt at classification of all its value.

---

[143] The difficulties in achieving a unanimously accepted classification were emphasized by Dölger, *IXΘYC* II, p. 422ff.; Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 318, etc. Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 68, and Frova, *Studi Mistrorigo*, p. 12, have observed a real *horror vacui* in the Danubian Rider scultpures. For the systems of classification of the Thracian Rider bas-reliefs see: Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 5ff., and Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 66ff.

[144] Dölger, *IXΘYC* II, p. 422ff.

[145] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1926, p. 116 and 1928, p. 91ff.

[146] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 4. Cf. also above, p. 79ff; Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 67, would accept Rostovtseff's classification, as being necessary also for clarifying the chronology of the Danubian tablets.

Far and away the best classification proposed hitherto remains that of Rostovtseff,[147] restricted to three main categories. It is none the less disputed by some specialists because he does not take account of the iconographic and stylistic themes of the monuments.

The classification proposed from the year 1937[148] onward by the present writer, comprising only two main categories (that of one Rider and that of two), each with subdivisions, has encountered mixed reactions, particularly in regard to the relations it established between the content of the repertoire and the form of the plaques.[149]

The latest proposal deserving notice was that put forward for the "Danubian stelae" by Ernest Will[150], comprising three main categories, which the author claims to have put in chronological series (A-C), each with several subdivisions.

Will's *first category* (A) comprises *the simple stele,* in low relief, with the upper edge arched—a form borrowed from the Thracian Rider monuments. The single Rider, (sometimes also the two Riders) occupies the whole sculptured surface of the piece. The monuments of this category are of stone, with one exception—the plaques of the same type. They all come, according to Will, "without exception from Dacia or Moesia". For the single-Rider subdivision Will lists the following pieces: 2, 17, 46, 79: and for that of two Riders: 89, 93, and 94.

The *second category* (B), called by Will *the stele with registers,* with one or two Riders, he considers the most important and as having given rise to the most numerous variants. He puts these variants in series, in very complicated fashion:

---

[147] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 318, n. 1.

[148] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 209ff. Chapouthier, *RÉA*, 1939, p. 67, accepts my classification. For him, the Danubian plaques offer in their repertory iconographical elements of their own and external elements grouped in two categories: one, religious, and common to all the public cults; two, symbols borrowed from mystery religions. Mladenova, *Studia Dečev*, p. 554, thinks the three registers appeared for the first time on the territory of Lower Moesia.

[149] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 318.

[150] *Ibid.*, pp. 312-331. He set himself (*ibid.*, p. 5) to study the cult reliefs "no longer in the tradition, that is not from the point of view of the historian of religions, but from that of the art historian."

1. *The stelae with a lower register* comprising in their turn three variants:

(a) *The stele properly so called* with the upper margin likewise arched and the lower part occupied by a register with the attributes, the objects, and the sacred animals. These pieces, for the most part of stone, have been found especially in Moesia and Dacia. In the group constituted by the single Rider, Will lists the monuments 1, 64, 58. To that with two Riders he assigns the pieces 20, 25, 28, 47, 71, 76, 81, 104, 173, and 175.

(b) *The roundels*, of stone or metal, with the same subdivisions, comprise the oval or circular pieces coarsely executed (27, 78, 105, 119, 139, 140, 160, 172, 178).

(c) *The intermediate types*, in which the symbols and certain subsidiary elements of the upper part of the relief are now grouped in a distinct register, although not yet completely separated from the rest of the repertoire (18, 92, 149, 174, 176).

2. *The stelae with a lower and upper register* constitute, according to Will, the classical type, with the central picture framed above and below by two secondary panels. This category has the following subdivisions:

(a) *The rectangular stele* which has the same distribution and is manufactured of a material identical with that of the single-register stelae (A). Six pieces are listed for the single-Rider type (9, 14, 15, 16, 29, 55) and eleven for the confronted Riders (4, 11, 12, 13, 19, 41, 50, 73, 113, 147, 182).

(b) *The monuments of round or oval shape* worked in stone are only three (3, 148, 153), since most of the pieces of this category are lead roundels bordered with rows of pearls (48, 57) or with two snakes arranged in a ring (120, 121, 151, 162, 171). Will puts in this same category the reliefs 125-126, in which the circular frame occupies a rectangular field, with the four seasons in the angles and surmounted by three acroteria.

(c) *The metal plaques of rectangular form* (137, 138, 169, 170), in which the three registers can be identified, although they are not separated by any line of demarcation. To this category too he assigns a lead plaque without architectural elements (mistakenly thought by Will to have come from Dacia).

The third category (C) is called by Will the *multiple-register* category, with many finds in Pannonia, where its specialized lead-casting workshops created a whole series of forms specific to the province, as follows:

1. *The plaques with columns and acroteria.* They have a frame composed of small columns at the sides and surmounted by three acroteria, occupied respectively by Sol, the solar quadriga (in the middle), and Luna. The principal register is heightened above and below by two other registers reserved for subsidiary scenes and for certain symbols, among which we notice the group of the lion, the vase, and the snake (135-136).
2. *The arcaded aedicule,* that is to say, a frame in aedicular form with two columns supporting an archivolt reserved for the solar quadriga. These pieces also have three panels (30, 34, 54, 116, 127, 128, 132, 167).
3. *The various multiple-register plaques* (35, 43, 56, 155, 156), the characteristics of which cannot be determined with sufficient clarity from Will's description.

As for the fragmentary and uncertain pieces, the author of this classification thinks they must have belonged for the most part either to the group of rectangular stelae, or to that of the roundels of category B.

After having put forward his classification, Will devotes a special chapter to justifying his point of view.[151] His classification principles are based on the presence or absence of secondary registers, the only feature credited with historical, religious, or artistic interest, whereas the form of the monuments for him takes second place.

---

[151] Will, *ibid.*, pp. 318-320. My thesis is accepted (cf. *ED* VII, p. 329) that the bas-reliefs in stone are the most ancient of the series and that the lead plaques from Pannonia date from the 3rd century.

But, in examining the divisions and subdivisions proposed by Will, we encounter the surprising fact that he himself has disregarded the criteria he lays down. For that reason he arrives at a complicated, mixed, mechanical classification, which is useless for the elucidation of such fundamental problems as the chronology, the evolution of forms, and the geographical distribution of certain types of monuments. When it is a question of deciding whether the single-Rider reliefs mark a certain stage in the development of the cult or if they do not rather mark a certain moment in its iconographic history, Will accepts the long-held view that these pieces are much earlier than those with two confronted Riders. This however does not prevent him, as we have seen, from taking no account of this when he defines the divisions and subdivisions of his classification, despite the great importance of this chronological and typological datum. Thus he is constantly led to mix up the single-Rider plaques and those with two Riders.[152] For this reason, moreover, Will's proposed classification lacks the three fundamental principles represented by chronology, typological evolution, and the distribution of certain characteristic groups of monuments by geographical regions or localities.

For the stimulus which led to the abandonment of the single Rider plaques (my category A) in favour of those with two Riders (my category B), Will finds the key to the problem in the so-called "symbolic triad" composed of two snakes flanking a vase.[153] This "symbolic triad" he considers must have caused the addition of a second Rider to the single one—a development exceptional by its originality (34, 47, 137, 138, 170).[154] It was the intermediate stage on the way to the "anthropormorphic triad", consisting of a female bust flanked by two male busts (11, 41, 147, 149). His analysis of the connections between the two types of triad leads Will to the conclusion that the first was linked with the "symbolism of the Dioscuri" and reproduced as such on the Danubian single-Rider plaques (category A). This it was in his view which led to the adoption in the central register of the triad composed of two Riders and the Goddess.[155] As for the second triad, that of the busts, Will maintains that it has nothing to do with the three deities of the central picture.[156] It was the representation of the symbolic triad of the Dioscuri (the snakes flanking the vase) which caused the appearance in the upper register of the other triad, which according to Will disappeared with the appearance of the two Riders.[157] Will declares that whereas the upper register arose out of the need to represent the Dioscuri triad the lower register was imposed by the requirements of the cult, making room for some important cult elements (the symbols and the mystery scenes).

---

[152] The arguments advanced by Will, *op. cit.*, p. 321, against the existence of local iconographic variants on the ground that the single-Rider bas-reliefs and those with two confronted Riders were found in the same locality, have no real archaeological basis.

[153] The hypothesis of the egg confronted by two snakes must be discarded. In actual fact it is an ovoidal vase badly carved (9, a); cf. also Mladenova, *Studia Dečev*, p. 554. I have already (in 1937, cf. *ED* VII, pp. 229, 260, 288 etc.) accepted the opinion that the snakes confronted around the vase (or the egg) also constitute a symbolic image of the Dioscuri (my view is ignored by Will!).

[154] Will's statement (*Rel. cult.*, p. 332, n. 1) that "it seems to me impossible

After having justified the principles of his classification and analysed the problem of the triad in the upper register, Will puts forward a series of historical conclusions, which, as he himself recognizes, confirms those stated by me in 1937-1938.

It must also be noted that Will's classification, apart from the gaps I have indicated, ignores (this time for reasons not of his own making) a category of monuments brought to light in recent finds. The reliefs of this new type reproduce the busts of the three great Danubian deities on their own, accompanied by a few symbols (96, 98, 102, 103), and they are found only in Scythia Minor (my category C). These pieces have now confirmed, contrary to Will's opinion, that the triad constituting the principal scene of the myth is indeed identical with the triad on the upper register of the same monuments.

---

to dissociate the pair of snakes confronted on their own from the pair around a vase or an egg" is invalidated by numerous Danubian tablets (I, 43, 46, 47, 71, etc., cf. Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 259, and *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961), p. 335).

[155] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 325ff.

[156] *Ibid.*, p. 324.

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 325.

On the other hand, the finds made in Dalmatia (106-112) show that the category of "the simple stele" was much more widespread (with certain new elements) than Will would allow. Neither the form of the monuments nor the number of registers (elements common to the two main categories of monuments) can be regarded as fundamental categories for a classification which would be universally accepted. The true criteria of classification are to be found in the content of the central cult scene in relation to the symbols and minor cult scenes surrounding it. Neither presence nor absence nor number of upper and lower registers are determined by a constant typological development. They depend in reality on certain technical elements such as the dimensions of the stone plaque which the sculptor had before him, his artistic capacities, the demands of his customer, and so on. And where the metallic pieces are concerned, we must also reckon with the commercial requirements of plaques cast by the charge. This it is which explains why there are single-Rider monuments with three or four registers (9, 16, 29, 55, 174, etc.) and pieces with two Riders but only a single scene (6, 94, 150, etc.). By contrast all the lead roundels and plaques are distinguished by their great number of registers prettily framed with architectural elements and decorative themes, and offering a whole range of representations of cult objects and scenes. The artisans who made them gave them this "baroque" look for commercial reasons, so as to make them as attractive as possible to likely purchasers.

The limited number of single-Rider plaques forbids us to accept Will's assertion, so categorically made, of the "essential fact" that "the primary model and the most ancient is that we see executed in the form of a stone stele".[158] This statement is in fact contradicted by the three bronze pieces found in Dacia (45, 46, 174), the modest repertoire of which, bare of cult or mystery scenes, attests without the shadow of a doubt that we are in the presence of the most ancient stage in the iconographical elaboration of these cultic reliefs. One of the three bronze pieces (45) does not contain the detail of the man prostrate under the horse's hooves, while the symbols and stylistic elements it does contain are strongly reminiscent of those found in the Razgrad plaques (cf. below, p. 174). We can thus affirm that the most ancient Danubian Rider plaques are those cast in bronze and brought to light on the territory of southern Dacia, not any stone monuments. It is to be noted also that bronze was not used except in one solitary case for the two-Rider plaques (173).

---

[158] *Ibid.*, p. 319.

Will's conclusions on the appearance and development of the two types of "triad" (the "symbolic triad" and the "anthropomorphic triad") do not stand up to a meticulous analysis of the Danubian monuments. For the French scholar has not taken into account what is after all an essential problem, the existence of a myth depicted in the principal scene of the reliefs, a myth which underwent a continuous narrative evolution. The importance of the number *three* in this myth determined the appearance of the triad in the heraldic scheme of the gods, the symbols, and the cult objects. In this sort of composition the snakes have an important place, and are associated with different objects, among them the vase, which in a number of cases is ovoid in shape.[159]

The group of the vase flanked by two snakes cannot have constituted the decisive element in the process which led to the doubling of the Riders, although it may have represented, as I have already noted above, a Dioscuric emblem. It must also be observed that there is a complete lack of analogies with scenes figuring on other cultic monuments, so that we cannot detect and follow the birth and development of similar iconographic processes, important as they would be. The study of the Danubian monuments with a single Rider reveals that the "symbolic triad" (in other words, the vase flanked by two snakes) can have been studied by Will in only three examples (9, 15, 29). In order to be able to argue its metamorphosis into the triad with three anthropomorphic busts, he minimizes the subsequent appearance of the snake triad on the two-Rider reliefs, stating that this occurs only in six examples (34, 113,

---

[159] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 256ff., and *Dacia*, V (1961), p. 336ff. Will argues from artistic motifs which are unknown in the repertory of the Dioscuri; the lion's head confronted by two snakes (174, a), the snake near a bust (58, b); snakes represented on their own (1, a; 46, a; 64, a) or in fragmentary condition (2, 17, 79). From the six monuments chosen by Will in support of his thesis (9, 14, 15, 16, 29, 55) three must be eliminated as being dubious (14, 16, 55).

137, 138, 169, 170)[160] and then rapidly disappears from the repertoire, to make room for the anthropomorphic triad. But in fact the vase flanked by two snakes reappears much more frequently than that on the two-Rider plaques. The actual statistics of the two types of triad on the two categories of monument are quite different from those offered by Will. The "symbolic triad" of the vase flanked by two snakes appears nine times on the single-Rider reliefs (9, a; 10, a; 15, a; 29, b; 107, a; 108, a; 183, a; 202, a; 203, a), and persists in seven cases on the two-Rider plaques (11, a; 113, a; 137, b; 138, b; 164, b; 170, b; 208, b). And where the pieces of the second category are concerned, the "symbolic triad" did not in any way progressively disappear, as Will claims, but persisted into the fourth century (208). In a single case, on a two-Rider monument (47), we find both triads (the "symbolic" and the "anthropomorphic"). It will be noticed that on the oldest single-Rider monuments this emblem is reduced to two confronted snakes (1, 45, 46), a theme which was to persist on numerous two-Rider plaques.

The anthropomorphic triad, on the other hand, is not completely absent from the single-Rider monuments, although only one Rider and a Goddess appear in their central picture. A recent find at Tibiscum (200, a) shows that the anthropomorphic triad (the busts of the three deities flanked by Sol and Luna) could appear on a single-Rider relief, in contradiction of Will's theory. It must be noted also that another find from the same locality has given us this anthropomorphic triad in the same hypostasis also on a two-Rider monument (204, a). Thus in the same locality, from the same workshop at the same period, we have monuments figuring the two triads, the symbolic and the anthropomorphic. How is this fact to be reconciled with Will's hypotheses?

When the number of Riders was doubled, our triad came to be widely used in the scenes filling the upper and lower registers of the reliefs. In most such cases it was joined with the sacred banquet of the three deities, in their celestial and chthonian characters (3, 19,

---

[160] It must be emphasized that the monument 113 is in stone and monuments 137, 138, 160, and 170 represent a single plaque cast in lead from the same mould.

28, 50, 51, 66, 68, 69, 88, 92, 99, 104, 127, 132, 133, 135, 147, 149, 153, 176, 182, 195, 198, 204, 210).[161] This anthropomorphic triad becomes independent in the third category of plaques (C), where it is now linked only with the divine banquet (96, 98, 102, 103).

In the light of such observations of a documentary character, it must be admitted that Will's theses on the two triads and their role in the appearance of the two-Rider plaques cannot be sustained as an effect of the influence exerted by the monuments of the Dioscuri. Once again, as I have already emphasized,[162] we cannot deny the influence exerted by the cult of the Dioscuri on the Danubian Rider religion, but neither are we entitled to declare that the Riders themselves may just as well be called the Castores!

There are certain iconographic variants of a regional kind in the Danubian plaques in respect of the costumes worn by the gods, the way their hair is dressed, and their different attributes. These variants are to be explained by the different interpretation of these details in each workshop by the anonymous ἱερογλύφοι But these iconographic variants cannot serve, either, as a documentary basis for the hypothesis of the supposed fusion of the Dioscuri with the Danubian Riders, for the sculptural repertoire of these latter taken as a whole has only occasional elements in common with the cult of the Castores.[163]

The fundamental criteria for the classification of the Danubian plaques rests on three essential elements: chronology, typology, and regional diffusion of certain specific types. These three elements are reflected in the evolution of the principal scene, just as much as in the secondary registers, and express the gradual enrichment of the myth concerned. It is from these classification principles that we arrive at three main classes of monuments, each having its particular subdivisions about which all sorts of hypotheses can be put forward.[164] In considering the important problem of their classification, we must take account of the fact that the Danubian plaques are among the most typical specimens of Roman provincial and popular art. They appeared and developed in a region and cultural environment where modest reliefs of the kind were able to preserve their traditional character, expressing the intellectual and artistic conditions of their age.[165]

---

[161] Cf. Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 292, and *RÉA*, 1939, p. 66, and Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 205. The anthropomorphic triad placed in the upper or lower registers is a repeat of the Goddess and two Riders found in the central register.

[162] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 219ff. Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 323 wrongly accuses me of an "ingerenza dei Dioscuri".

[163] Tudor, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

For my part, I maintain in regard to this classification the picture I put forward 39 years ago, with the addition, as is only right and proper, of the data supplied by the most recent finds.[166] The emphasis turns on the three main classes I then defined (A-C), while the respective subdivisions help us to follow the details of their iconographic and religious evolutions by provincial and regional groups.

We distinguish then the following three main classes:

A. the plaques with a single Rider and a goddess;
B. the monuments with two Riders and a goddess;
C. the reliefs with two Riders and a goddess figured on their own (by busts) at the banquet scene.

*Class A* comprises 31 examples which are the most ancient, being dated for the most part to the first half of the 2nd century. Their distribution by provinces is as follows: 17 pieces from Dacia (1, 2, 9, 10, 14-17, 29, 33, 40, 45, 46, 200-203); 8 pieces from the two Moesias (55, 58, 59, 64, 77, 79, 90, 232); 4 from Dalmatia (106-108, 110); and two of unknown provenance (174, 183) but in all probability originating in Dacia.

Some subdivisions can be established in this first principal group.

(a) The plaques (of bronze, stone, or terracotta) of this first subdivision are distinguished by the absence of secondary registers, their sculptors having confined them to a simple representation of the principal scene. Attention is concentrated on the Rider (portrayed in imposing proportions) around whom are grouped religious

[164] *Ibid.*, p. 209.
[165] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 462.
[166] Tudor, *ED* VII, pp. 209-211.

symbols varying in number or cult objects (2, 17, 40, 45, 46, 77, 79, 90, 174). They have been brought to light only in Dacia and Lower Moesia, in the neighbourhood of the Danube. Some of these examples show themselves strongly influenced artistically by the Thracian Rider reliefs (45, 79, 90) or by Mithraic monuments (46, 174). Worthy of separate mention is the bronze plaque found in southern Dacia (45), which I consider the most ancient piece in this subdivision.

(b) The stone reliefs belonging to this subdivision are distinguished by the appearance of a lower register specially reserved for the groups of religious symbols and cult objects. They are arched in their upper part and the principal scenes keep the character of the preceding subdivision. These pieces have been found only in Dacia and the two Moesias (1, 58, 59, 64, 232).

(c) This is the most numerous subdivision. It is the one which by the content of its repertoire fixes the transition to the category of the two-Rider plaques. Its reliefs are always provided with three or four registers, with the principal scene of the single Rider and the Goddess of smaller proportions. The two chief deities do not much differ in size from their attendants. On the other hand, the number of attendants in the register concerned is increased to at least five persons. In the upper register, framed by the busts of Sol and Luna, we note for the first time the presence of the group of two snakes flanking the vase (often of ovoid shape), as well as the triad of busts flanked by Sol and Luna. The lower registers, apart from the cult objects, contain scenes of sacrifice or mystery rites. The area of distribution of this subdivision encompasses Dacia, Upper Moesia, and Dalmatia (9, 10, 14-16, 29, 33, 55, 106-108, 110, 183, 200-203).

These three subdivisions show emphatically that the most numerous and characteristic pieces have been constantly brought to light in Dacia and especially in the neighbourhood of the Danube (Lower Dacia). The last subdivision moreover shows evident traces of the strong influence exerted by contact with other religions, the oriental ones in particular. It is to be observed also that we do not find in this class of monuments any indication that lead was ever used as their primary material.

*Class B.* This category, characterized by the presence of two

Riders and a Goddess in the principal scene, is illustrated by a large number of pieces in a varied range of subdivisions determined by provinces and regions or well-known regional workshops. It is presumed that the most ancient of these reliefs are those showing a single enemy under the horses' hooves (24, 42, 47, 62, 173, 182).[167] The greater number of pieces making up this category contain three registers, referring to three aspects of the cult (underworld, terrestrial, and celestial). This does not mean that there are not a considerable number of examples with only two registers (7, 25, 27, 28, 47, 71, 78, 80, 86, 99, 104, 114, 119, 154, 173, 175, 178, 184, 198), while other examples have four (34, 36, 37, 42, 56, 127, 132, 133, 146), even sometimes five (35, 48). Except for certain engraved gems in which space was necessarily very limited, there are only three cases where the whole available space has been entirely reserved by the sculptor for the scene of the myth involving the three deities (6, 94, 97). These three examples can hardly be put in a separate subdivision, peculiar to a certain region or a certain period. It is a case, quite simply, of the humble work of certain humble gem engravers.

In this class of monuments several subdivisions must be distinguished, some of which none the less allow certain doubts about their real existence.

(a) The stone and terracotta bas-reliefs with two registers, of which the upper one occupies the greater part of the sculptured field and is reserved for the fundamental scene, that of the three great deities. These are carved in imposing size. Above their heads the busts of the sun and moon deities are placed, less frequently a triad, and among the attendants Nemesis or a Victory. Frequently too there is a lion as companion at arms alongside the Riders. Sometimes one of the fallen enemies beneath the horses' hooves is missing. The lower register is reserved for a limited number of symbols, which always include the ram and the altar. In execution, the standard of work of these reliefs is usually rather coarse (7, 20, 25, 27, 47, 71, 76, 78, 80, 86, 104, 114, 119, 154, 160, 173, 175, 176, 178, 184).

(b) The plaques of various shapes worked in stone are very numerous. They have three registers, with the emphasis still on the central one, though its dimensions are no longer quite so impressive as previously. All its registers are richly illustrated with mystery scenes, cult objects, secondary deities, religious symbols, and so on (3, 11, 18, 28, 50, 66, 81, 88, 99, 113, 140, 153, 155, 190, A; 191, A; 192, A; 193, A; 195, 196, 197, 204, 228).

---

[167] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

(c) The lead plaques of this subdivision have 4-5 registers and were brought to light in the region of the cities of Drobeta, Romula, Sucidava, Oescus, and Novae. They are usually quadrilateral or aedicular in form, with five variants and a figurative repertoire both rich and varied (34-37, 42, 43, 72-75, 81, 83, 201).

(d) This subdivision covers the rich series of Pannonian plaques with four registers, quadrilateral in form. With four variants (according to Ochsenschlager), they were made from the age of the Severi into the second half of the third century. In these the central picture of the myth shows no difference in its proportions from those of the other two registers. On the other hand, an important place was reserved for the solar elements and the mystery scenes. The *plumbarii* took the greatest pains to work out an artistic architectural framework (columns, *acroterium*, etc.). The different registers are no longer separated by prominent lines, and the scenes take place in perfectly horizontal groups in a narrative and historical succession (127, 132, 133, 146).[168]

(e) *Aediculae* with acroteria on which the principal scene loses some of its importance. These pieces too are specific to the Pannonian workshops specialized in lead casting (115, 125, 126, 135, 137). The picture is bordered in each case with a cable-moulding. The arrangement of the different scenes of the repertoire follows the same perfectly horizontal order as in the previous subdivision where appropriate (135, 137) but not of course in the other three cases where the principal field is outlined in the form of a medallion (115, 125, 126). This subdivision can be dated to a period from the second half of the third century into the age of Constantine.[169]

---

[168] In Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium*, II, p. 52ff. and p. 55, my classification corresponds to type I with its variants; A (132); B (127); C (133) and type IV (146).

[169] Ochsenschlager, *op. cit.*, p. 53ff.; type II, with the variants A-B.

(f) The lead roundels found in Dacia (44, 48), Upper Moesia (56-57), and especially in the two Pannonias (120, 121, 139, 140, 151, 162, 171, 172, 208-211, 217) must be counted among the pieces with the most careless organization of the repertoire in relation to the principal scene. Most of them can be dated from the second half of the third century and the first half of the fourth.[170]

(g) The engraved gems form a subdivision on their own and belong to the period of fullest expansion of the Danubian Rider cult. In our day, unfortunately, the provenance of all listed examples is unknown (87-197 and 228).

To all these must be added the numerous group of monuments in such a fragmentary state that they cannot be attributed to any particular subdivision.

*Class C.* The third main category of monuments. In view of the small number of pieces representing it and the clarity of their content, with the banquet scene reproduced separately (the triad of principal deities taking part), and in view of the limited area where finds of this sort have been made (the Dobrudja), there are for the moment no subdivisions in this category. The three great deities, represented only by their busts (the men wearing peaked fur caps and clothed in furs), have facing them a small table, some vases, and a ram's head (96, 98, 102, 103). These last plaques are all of recent discovery and were thus not included in the catalogue I drew up 39 years ago.

---

[170] Ochsenschlager, *op. cit.*, p. 54, is type III.

# PART THREE

# ICONOGRAPHICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

A careful examination, under all its aspects, of the sculptural repertoire peculiar to the Danubian plaques is today still (in the absence of inscriptions and more exact literary data) the sole means of gaining an insight, small as that may be, into the nature of this religion. Such research into the sculptural repertoire, however, remains difficult. Much of the workmanship is coarse and artistically inferior, and certain pieces are in a bad state of preservation. Moreover, in the case of the metal plaques, the stereotyped repetition of the same elements tends to make a static impression, unfavourable to the labour of interpretation. Further, in order to elucidate the meaning of many of the more confused cult scenes, considerable use must be made of analogies with other mystery religions.

On all accounts, in the study of cultic representations of this kind a start must be made with the principal picture, representing the myth which the sculptor was required to illustrate. In our case the centre of attention is occupied by a Great Goddess, and with her I begin my analysis.

## A. THE GREAT GODDESS

The Goddess appears almost always in association with one or two Riders. The monuments of Class A show her facing the Rider, whom she receives with open arms. In those of Class B she is placed between two Riders. Finally, in Class C she takes the central place at the banquet of the divine triad. In only one case is she lacking, the lead roundel 120 b. But the explanation of her absence is not there given, as Hampel[1] supposed, by a whim of the craftsman, who just left her out. In reality all we have here is an unsuccessful casting operation, as is shown by certain prominent lines in the space where she would normally be found, undoubtedly representing her silhouette.[2] In the same way the presence of a man wearing a cap on the Terracina relief (176, a) must be put down to a mere workshop error. We note also that on a relief of unknown provenance (183, b) the usual functions of the Great Goddess are performed by her attendant, Nemesis.

---

[1] Hampel, *BpReg*, 1904, p. 10. On two gems (192, b; 193, b) the Goddess is replaced by men (wrongly drawn by illustrator). On another engraved gem instead of a woman we see the snake (197, b).

On the plaques of Class A we notice the absence of any religious attribute or specific clothing of the Goddess. She wears an ankle-length dress: a long robe, covered by a short cloak held at the waist by a girdle. Her head is often dressed with a veil (1, b; 15, b; 45, b; 46, a; 64, a; 174, a) or a modius (72, c; 153, b; 194, A, b; 199, b). But most often her long hair falls to her shoulders. Only one relief shows her seated on a base with Nemesis (1, b). Frequently the goddess is receiving the Rider with open arms (10, b; 16, b; 29, c; 45, b; 46, a; 174, a), but sometimes too she is reaching her hand out towards the horse's muzzle (1, b; 45, b; 64, a; 77; 107, b), or else she is lifting the skirts of her robe to make a sort of pouch offering the horse fodder (1, b; 9, b; 10, b; 16, b; 17; 56, b; 57, b; 106, b; 107, b; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 140, a; 150; 156, b; 157, a; 162, c; 173, a; 203, b). On another bronze plaque, one of those found in southern Dacia, the Goddess is feeding the horse from a receptacle (46). In only four cases, the Goddess seems to be paying no attention either to the Rider or his mount (58, a; 59, b; 79; 90); on these reliefs, all four brought to light in Moesia, the Goddess, in bust, looks at the spectator, with a tripod or *monopodium* in front of her and on it the fish. The presence in monuments of this category of the table and fish (with the Goddess beside or behind it) is an important and characteristic feature. The table is either a *monopodium* or a *mensa Delphica* (2; 58, a; 59, a; 77; 79; 90).

While in the monuments of Class A the Goddess takes a side place, to the right of the main picture, in those of Class B the sculptors have given her the place of honour, in the very centre of the scene, to which the faithful would look first of all. This makes her the deity most in view in the two-Rider version of the myth. At the same time the artist has lessened the proportions of horses and Riders, thus making the Goddess as large as they. The marble reliefs from Poetovio (155, b; 156, b) show the Goddess in a sort of niche, and in proportions much larger than those of the two Riders. Similarly, while in the monuments of Class A it was the Goddess who received the Rider with outstretched arms, this time it is generally the two Riders who salute the Goddess. She is stationary, merely stretching out her hands to the horses' muzzles and offering them food (3, b; 4, b; 6; 7; 9; 19, b; 22, b; 34, c; 72, c; 75, b; 37, b; 39; 41, b; 42, b; 48, b; 81, b; 88, b; 97; 99, b; 101; 112, b; 113, b; 137, c; 170, c; 182, b; 187; 188; 189; 190, b; 191, b; 193, b; 194, b; 195, a). If we suppose the drawing of an engraved gem (191, b) to be accurate, the Goddess there is holding the horses' reins. (There is the same doubt about monument 38, b). There are very rare cases in which the Goddess remains absolutely stationary, folding her arms across her body.

---

[2] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 211.

Her clothing in Class B is the same as in the Class A reliefs, except that the veil tends to disappear.[3] She is seen wearing a Phrygian cap on only one Dacian relief (7, b), but this must certainly be due to a sculptor's error. Usually she appears full face, but there are also cases where she is seen side face, looking at one or other of the two Riders (34, c; 42, b; 126, b; 187; 192, b). Sometimes there is a base under her feet in the form of a *monopodium* (137, c), but in most cases this pedestal is reduced to a mere stroke (34, c; 125, c; 151, b; 162, b; 171, b; 191, b; 193, b). In three cases she is enthroned on a high-backed seat (18, b; 147, b; 195, a). As I noted above, in several cases (especially on Pannonian pieces) she is holding up the skirts of her robe or else holding in her hands a piece of cloth the ends of which hang down in twists, making a sort of open pouch containing fodder for the horses (56, b; 57, b; 125, c; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 150, 156, a; 157, a; 161, b; 173). On a Dalmatian relief the Goddess appears holding in her two hands a big circular vase filled with grain which she offers as feed to the horses (114, a), while on two marble reliefs (from Carnuntum and Porolissum) she even holds a vase in each hand offering them separately to each of the animals (149 and 198, b).

---

[3] The clothes roughly indicated by the sculptor on the stone bas-relief suggest they were completed in colour. The thick clothing on the two Poetovio reliefs (155, b; 156, b) reflects the local costume, imposed by the harsh climate of Pannonia.

In the way of adornment, on several Pannonian lead plaques she wears ear-rings (127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b). On a plaque found in several copies in the Lower Danube valley (36, 74, 75, b) it even looks as if the Goddess is wearing a small circular crown (unless perhaps they are no more than curls with which her hair is dressed?). Her coiffure, divided in two on the crown of the head, falls in long locks over her shoulders. Sometimes, however, on certain Pannonian lead plaques, her hair is dressed carefully in the fashion of the age of the Severi (132, c; 133, c), or in big curls framing her forehead (127, c; 135, b).

The plaques of this second class (B) are just as lacking in specific religious attributes, such as might give us an idea of the deity's name or her nature. Only three cases can be picked out (35, c; 72, c; 194, a) in which the hair is dressed with a *kalathos-modius*, emblem of fecundity. In another case two cornucopiae hang down from the head (47, a). Finally, on a lead plaque from Romula and on an engraved gem her feet rest on a dagger, arranged horizontally or slanting (34, c and 218, b).

But the most important characteristic found on monuments of all three classes remains the *fish*, in the majority of cases lying on a table, or rather a tripod, with a preference for the *mensa Delphica* type.[4] Sometimes this table is placed at the Goddess's feet, in the neighbouring register but always on a level with her, or else in a quite different place in the lower registers. At all events, the fish is almost always present on the Danubian plaques. Besides the fish, the table sometimes bears other offerings for the Goddess; circular objects which may represent loaves or fruits (79; 104, a; 173, b; 191, b); in a single case, on the table next the fish is also a two-handled vase (87, a).

---

[4] See *CMRED* I, p. 128 (index). Exceptionally the tripod is replaced by the *monopodium* (2; 63, a; 90), the *bipodia* (114, b), the *quinquepodia* (80, a), the *sexapodia* (39, a; 62, a), the altar (26, a), or a table in the form of a cup with three feet (31, a)—due to the fancy of the stone-carvers. The lack of space sometimes caused the sculptors to fuse the side legs of the table with the horses' legs (18, a; 65, a; 148, a; 153, b; 175, a etc.). Sometimes the table was painted; also the fish resting on it (31, a; 61, b; etc.). The presence of the table facing the Goddess might cause her to be portrayed in bust; but sometimes the Goddess's robe is visible, below the tripod (3, b; 37, b; 182, b). It should be noted that in Mithraic sculpture we do not find a constant form of table, as is the case with the *mensa Delphica* on the Danubian plaques (Cumont, *MMM*, p. 174). No doubt the number three for the table legs also represents a symbolic element of the cult.

Finally, on the four plaques representing the third category (C), the Goddess is represented in bust, as a guest at the divine banquet, with the tripod in front of her bearing the fish, or a vase (96, 98, 102, 103). So far as can be discerned there is nothing special about her costume. In some rare cases the table before the Goddess has only one leg, thus belonging to the *monopodium* type (2; 21; 23, a; 25, a; 63, a; 65, a; 66, b; 78, a; 82, a; 86, a; 90); but it must be noted that in each such case it is the lack of space which has prevented the sculptor from reproducing the tripod. As I said, it is in most cases a tripod, that is to say a *mensa Delphica* of great sacral significance (3,b; 5, 6, 7 b; 18, b; 22, b; 27, a; 28, b; 32, a; 34, d; 37, b; 39, 41, d; 47, a; 48, c; 50, b; 58, a; 59, a; 72, d; 75, c; 76, a; 77, 79; 83, c; 85, a; 87; 94; 96, b; 97; 99, b; 101; 104, a; 105, a; 118, a; 122, a; 140, a; 148, a; 154, b; 175, a; 176, b; 177, a; 181, a; 182, a; 198, b). Often the two side legs of this table form a solid block with the horses' legs. In two cases, in a quite exceptional manner, the table has five legs (80, a) or six legs (62, b).

Whether as if an attribute of the Goddess, or as an allusion to the sacred banquet, or finally as connected with certain rites, the *mensa Delphica* also appears in the lower registers (1, c; 7, b; 9, c; 16, c; 34, d; 42, c; 71, b; 72, e; 81, c; 106, c; 113, c; 120, b; 125, c; 126, c; 127, d; 132, e; 133, e; 135, d; 137, d; 146, c; 155, d; 157, b; 173, b; 174, c; 177, b; 183, c; 190, c; 191 A, c; 192 A, c; 194, A, c; 195, b; 200, c; 201, b; 203, c; 227 A, c). In most cases the legs of this table have a sort of curve half-way up. Among the versions worth remarking we note the presence of one table with a cloth neatly folded (37, c); sometimes too the table is found on the same monument in two different situations (72, d, e; and 113, c), or else furnished with only two legs (114, b) or with four (204, c).

The absence of any distinctive feature in the Goddess's portrait or of any specific attribute has given rise to numerous discussions of her religious character, her functions, and her name. Thus Antonescu[5] saw in her the syncretistic deity Artemis-Anahita-Cybele-Rhea-Venus-Diana of Ephesus, associated, as in other Roman cult monuments, with the Cabiro-Dioscuri. Nowotny[6] proposed to identify her with Demeter assimilated to Helen, as in Sparta, the goddess who later, in her association with the Cabiri, modified her character to such an extent as to become completely unrecognizable.

Hampel's[7] first opinion was that she must be Terra Mater, since one of the lead medallions (48) in his view figured a whole series of agricultural implements. Elsewhere he is inclined to accept her syncretism with Helen, the sister of the Dioscuri, and then with Magna Mater. But the influence on which he most strongly insisted at first was that of Epona, the Celtic mother goddess.[8] Her Epona-like attributes were for Hampel undeniable, as for instance on a fragmentary relief from Carnuntum (149), or on all those monuments where she is feeding the horses with her hands or offering them fodder from the skirts of her robe. This did not deter Hampel later, after Ziehen[9] had severely criticized his first hypothesis, from denying the influence of Epona entirely, on account of the absence of the fish in the cult of the Celtic goddess.[10]

For Dölger it is the Goddess who is the principal deity of the cult and not the Riders, seeing that she occupies the first place in the Danubian bas-reliefs.[11] He identifies her with Atargatis, adducing a whole series of arguments, based essentially on the tripod with the fish, so frequently associated with the goddess in the Danubian plaques. He seeks to buttress his thesis by an appeal to certain ancient literary sources and archaeological data, which I shall summarize in what follows.

A number of ancient writers mention that the Syrians abstained from eating fish, which they considered the preferred food of the goddess Atargatis,[12] and therefore sacred. Athenaeus[13] in his account tells us that the priests of this goddess offer her a daily sacrifice of a fish, which once the sacrifice had been consummated could be eaten only by the officiants themselves. Thus Dölger singled out the presence of the fish on the Danubian plaques, either reposing on the tripod in front of the goddess or on the banqueting table, where human diners may have thought that by consuming this mystical food they became consubstantial with the deity. Dölger reasoned that in the age of syncretism *Atargatis-Dea Syria* was assimilated to other deities with similar attributes—Derketo, Cybele, Artemis, Selene, Bendis, and so on. From her assimilation with Artemis of Ephesus she would have acquired other attributes noted on the monuments, transforming her into a Mother-Goddess of life, night, and the world. He considered that all these successive processes of assimilation must have taken place on the Asia Minor littoral, and cites in evidence a coin of Hadrian struck at Ephesus[14] showing Artemis-Anahita between the Dioscuri. On the reverse of the coin he claims that the representation is identical with that of the Goddess between the Danubian Riders—the deity with her hair dressed in a modius and holding folds of material in her hands and the two Riders in heraldic pose saluting her with right hands raised. Arguing from this effigy on the Ephesian coin Dölger thinks that the primitive iconographic type of the Danubian plaques was inspired by this monetary representation at the beginning of the second century A.D., when the cult originating in Asia Minor entered Thrace and there became gradually assimilated to that of Artemis-Bendis. Subsequently it evolved in Thrace into that of a "Mother of the Gods", whose name varied from one region to another, and was widely diffused by the Danubian plaques.

---

[5] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, pp. 37 and 45. In another place (*ibid.*, p. 40) he supposes that the fish and the double axe are attributes of Atargatis.

[6] Nowotny, *WMBH* IV (1896), p. 299.

[7] Hampel, *BdRég*, 1904, p. 33ff. and *AÉrt*, 1905, p. 16.

[8] Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1903, p. 307 and *BdRég*, *loc. cit.*

[9] Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 12ff.

[10] Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 342.

[11] Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 130ff. and II p. 437ff.

---

[12] Porphirius, *De abst.* II (ed. Nauck, p. 186); Ovid., *Fast.*, II, 471-474; Ovid, *Metam.*, IV, 46, V, 33; Diodor. Sicul., *Bibl. hist.*, II, 4, 2; Strabo, *Geogr.*, XVI, 1, 127; Plutarch, *De superst.*, 10; Lucianus, *De Dea Syria*, 14.

[13] Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* VIII, 37. Cf. Dussaud, *Notes de mythol. syrienne* II, IX, Paris 1905, p. 99; Turchi, *Relig. mist.*, p. 167ff. and Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 108. For other abstentions from eating fish cf. Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften im griechischen Kult*, Giessen, 1910, p. 115ff. and Foucart, *Myst. Eleusis*, p. 284ff.

[14] Dölger, *op. cit.*, III, pl. XXXIV, Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 75ff., no. 68, proves that the coins were not struck in the time of Hadrian.

This idea that our Goddess was a Mother-Goddess was likewise supported by Rostovtseff[15] in all the works of his already quoted. Her cult, he thought, must have reached the Danube at a remote epoch, coming from southern Russia. Once she reached the Roman Danubian provinces she became assimilated with a series of other female deities, including Atargatis.

For Buday,[16] the Goddess of the Danubian plaques is Magna Mater or Terra Mater, assimilated to Demeter, Helen, Epona, with attributes resembling those of Hephaestus.[17] In support of his thesis Buday adduces the following arguments: 1. The Goddess wears a girdle constituting an allusion to the mysteries of Samothrace, where the initiates wore a red girdle in memory of the third Cabirus who was killed. 2. She appears on a monument associated with the Dioscuri and assimilated to Helen, as the dedicatory inscription tells us. 3. The horn forming the Goddess's headdress is similar to that of Helen. 4. She can be identified with Helen on the Aequum relief (113, b) by the two half-moons flanking her. 5. Her assimilation to Epona is shown by the number of plaques in which she feeds the horses. 6. Her assimilation to Terra Mater, and thus to Demeter, appears on the lead plaque from Orlea (43, b), where she is seen holding in her arms a child who stretches his hands towards the horses' muzzles. 7. She appears likewise clothed in the attributes of Demeter on a plaque from Virunum (173, a), which shows her upright walking upon the waters while a shipwrecked man swims towards her. 8. She can be identified with the Helen hypostasis on all those plaques where her head is flanked by two lamps instead of two stars.

In his voluminous monograph on the Mithraic iconography and ideology, Campbell[18] analyses a Danubian plaque brought to light at Halapić (116). He identifies the Goddess represented in the centre of the scene with Aphrodite-Spandarmat, holding in her hands the cosmic girdle (*kostik-kestos*) representing the bond between Genesis and Asa in the physical world. He points out that "both Spandarmat and Aphrodite were divinities of the spring season, and Anāhita, an assistant of Spandarmat who tends to supplant her after the fourth century B.C., was a divinity of both sky and earth waters." Aphrodite-Spandarmat on our plaques, he believes, "would correspond to Despoina at Lykosura (Paus. 8, 37) whose sovereignty is plainly derived from the creative or generative powers of Demeter."[19] Finally the American scholar (as regards the syncretism of the Goddess of the Danubian plaques) arrives at the idea of her assimilation with Nemesis-Asa-Spandarmat-Artemis-Agathe Tyche-etc.—all divinities of wisdom and of the law governing cosmic movements.

---

[15] *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 20.

[16] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 124ff.

[17] For this serious error see above, p. 31ff, n. 30.

[18] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, pp. 331-334.

The key to the nature of this Goddess is for Ochsenschlager the amphora present on certain plaques (belonging to types II-IV of his classification). This is the symbol of the *aqua vitae*, which prompts him to the following conclusion: "She must be an aspect of the mother goddess who encompasses both the idea of earth and of life-giving water. She is the lower sublunary world of generation under Luna, the superior world, while Sol represents the third world which was supreme."[20] The Danubian Goddess, he thinks, was assimilated to Despoina-Nemesis, so as to reflect "the ruling aspect of the earth-mother who receives, holds, and gives forth all life".[21] In her religious essence "the goddess, and hence her servants, is creative and destructive for she gives both life and death. She is also, however, destructive in creativity, for one part of her power is the evil aspect of creative energy latent in nature and man. It is only through the perfecting or initiation rites that an individual can escape from a world polluted by the perverted aspect of creative energy."[22]

For my part, I reserve my opinions on the origin of this divinity, her religious character, the syncretism she underwent, and so on, until I have completed my study of the Riders who accompany her.

---

[19] Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 234, n. 59 and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 59.

[20] Ochsenschlager, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.* The syncretistic alliances attributed by the author to this deity are very far-reaching. He merges her with *Agathe Tyche*—Ašiš—Despoina—Demeter, Artemis, etc. The analogies, too, between the Danubian tablets and Mithraic theology can easily be exaggerated.

Let us therefore pass to the objections that can be made against the theories formulated by Dölger, Buday, and the rest.

The identification of the Danubian Goddess uniquely with Atargatis, without allowing her any syncretistic links, as Dölger does, encounters many objections. 1. The iconographic type of the reliefs of Class B is, in the Orient, much earlier than the beginning of the second century A.D. 2. Why was Atargatis not represented in the other provinces, too, with the tripod and fish before her, if it is really she who was so represented on the plaques of the Danubian provinces?[23] How are we to explain the absence from these plaques of the other religious and iconographical attributes of the Syrian goddess, as well as the fact that her *polos* is a rather dubious feature? 4. When we come to the strip of material she holds in her hands, certain distinctions must be made. In fact, on certain Danubian plaques (cf. above, p. 101ff) the Goddess holds a strip of material with which she forms a "pouch" containing the horses' feed. In the oriental monuments of the goddess Atargatis what we have is no longer a strip of material held by the goddess in her two hands at the level of her stomach, but two separate strips of material each hanging from one of her arms and falling the length of her body to the ground—quite a different thing. 5. There is not the slightest archaeological evidence for a direct importation at any time of the Atargatis cult, for the deity who figures on the Danubian plaques, apart from the fish, has nothing in common with this *Dea Syria*.

As for the hypotheses of Buday, formulated on the basis of certain more careful opinions of Antonescu, Nowotny, and Hampel, they seem to me altogether mistaken. 1. His appeal to the Goddess's girdle as evidence of her cult's connection with the mysteries of Samothrace is a nonsense. In fact, it is nothing but a simple detail of ordinary clothing. 2. The monuments with inscriptions dedicated to the Dioscuri catalogued by Buday in the Danubian Rider series have nothing in common with them and are in fact much older. 3. On the Orlea plaque the Goddess is not carrying a baby in her arms. This is merely a personal interpretation of Buday's from examination of an inaccurate photogravure of the monument. 4. The supposed waves identified by him under the horses' hooves on the Virunum representation (173) are in reality a sculptor's way of indicating the ground and thus offer no parallel with the Dioscuri riding the waters.[24]

---

[23] The iconographic aspects of Atargatis are described by Dussaud, *Notes myth. syrien.*, II-IX, p. 96ff.

The Goddess's ultimate origin in Asia Minor, and her syncretism with various oriental deities, as proposed by certain authors (Campbell, Ochsenschlager, and the rest), is not supported by any literary or archaeological evidence. The same can be said of her importation from southern Russia (Rostovtseff), which encounters similar difficulties of a documentary kind.

## B. The Rider-Gods

The equestrian divinities accompanying the Goddess are two in number on the plaques of Classes B and C, while those of the first class A only have one Rider. They are depicted in the two first categories entire, with their mounts, while in the monuments of the third category they are figured only in bust.

In the bas-reliefs of Class A the Rider occupies the centre of the picture and is shown facing right with his mount[25] (1, b; 2; 9, b; 10, b; 15, b; 16, b; 17, b; 29, c; 45, b; 46; 55, b; 58, a; 59, a; 64, a; 77; 79; 90; 106, b; 107, b; 174; 183, b; 200-203, b). Usually his proportions in comparison with other personages in the same register are larger than life. He is shown in two situations: either galloping to the right and showing only his side-face (9, b; 16, b; 29, c; 55, b; 107, b; 174; 183, b; 200-203, b) or turned towards the viewer with a slow movement (1, b; 15, b; 45, b; 46; 58, a; 59, a; 64, a; 77; 79; 90; 106, b). An important point which has been noticed is that the front face usually goes with a slow walking gait of the horse, while the side face is shown by the galloping Rider.[26] The face of the single

---

[24] But Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 128, himself states that this scene is enacted on the soil symbolized by the snakes.

[25] Exception: *mon.* 77, where he is advancing towards the left.

[26] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 221. This writer offers us a detailed study of :he horses and Riders in movement or at rest, with interesting conclusions from the art history point of view. In formulating our theories we must not forget the limited artistic capability of Roman provincial scupture on the Danube.

Rider is generally adorned with a bushy beard (1, b; 15, b; 55, b; 174, b); it is only rarely that this god is shown beardless (45, b; 46; 79).

The Riders are uniformly clothed in most of the monuments, no matter what category they belong to. There are cases, however, where their costume varies from monument to monument and even, in the bas-reliefs of Class B, where the two Riders are clothed differently. In most cases they are in Phrygian costume; a high cap with the peak hanging down in front, a short tunic, very rarely with short trousers and a cloak caught by the wind (cf. *CMRED* I, p. 132, index). It should be emphasized that on the A and C plaques the Riders never appear bare-headed, but always wearing a Phrygian cap. Only among the pieces of Class B do we sometimes observe that one or both of the Riders is bare-headed (34, c; 48, c; 83, b; 113, b; 114, a; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b).

The cap worn by the single Rider in the most ancient monuments is called "Phrygian" (*alopekis*), but it could just as well be called a "Dacian cap" in view of its characteristic form with the peak brought down in front (1, b; 15, b; 45, b; 46; 56, b; 58; 59; 64; 77; 79; 90; 106, b; 107, b; 174; 183, b; 200-203, a).[27] Sometimes too the sculptor has given this cap the conical form of the pileus (15, b; 29, c; 41, c; 183, b; 187), but this without doubt is because of the incompetence of the craftsman who carved it. It is no less true that the Phrygian cap is specific to the costume of many oriental divinities (Mithras, Sabazius, Jupiter Dolichenus, etc.), as indeed is the case also with the tunic and the chlamys. In fact, they are constantly found clothed in what is generally called oriental costume, composed of a chiton, and perhaps also a chlamys or a *tunica manicata* covered by a chlamys fastened near the neck, leaving the rest free to play it the wind; only in one case is it fastened with a fibula (1, b). We note that this costume is found also in general lines on the Thracian Rider.[28]

In his right hand the Rider offers the Goddess a cup or a rhyton (45, b; 90), when he is not brandishing a double axe (1, b; 58, 64;

[27] Will, *op. cit.*, p. 258, n. 1, accepts "une transposition du bonnet Dace". For the Thracian Rider, cf. Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 9.

[28] Kazarow, *loc. cit.*

71; 106, b; 174) or a spear (9, b; 15, b; 29, c; 55, b; 110, b; 183, b; 200, a; 203, a) poised to strike his enemy fallen under the horses's hooves. Besides the axe, he is also armed with a dagger worn at his hip, as in a relief from Upper Moesia (64, a). Rarely, he holds in his hands only the horse's reins (59, a; 107, b) or else he salutes the Goddess with raised hand (77). It must be emphasized that he never wields a hammer either as weapon or as sceptre. It was the mistaken idea that he bore a hammer which induced Buday to identify him with one of the Cabiri brothers.[29] It must likewise be noted that the Rider is never seen with the *draco* borne as a standard. This only appears on the Class B reliefs, by which time the character of the Riders as Roman στρατιῶται has become clearly discernible.

Once two Riders have been adopted, the ordering of the group of three divinities in the principal scene becomes heraldic. The Goddess is upright in the centre, flanked to right and left by the two Riders; the number of attendants and snakes increases, so does their frequency, framing them on both sides. We note the enrichment of the scene, whence proceeds also a greater variety of detail, such as arms, costumes, movements, and variety too in the age of the principal figures. The posture of the two Riders is either motionless, facing the spectator, or galloping and striking the enemy trampled by the feet of their mounts.

They are frequently bearded, especially in the monuments brought to light in Dacia (3, b; 4, b; 5; 6; 11, A, b; 12; 18, b; 20,a; 25, a; 27; 47, a; 49; 198, b; 204, b; 205, a) and in Moesia (50, b; 56, b; 65, a; 66, b; 76, a; 78, a; 80, a; 87, a); more rarely on the pieces discovered in other regions (119, a; 148, a; 153, b; 160, a; 175, a; 178, a; 182, b; 184, a). In no case so far known is one of the Riders bearded and the other beardless.

In general, the two Riders retain the costume characteristic of the first category monuments. As far as concerns the origin of their costume and the names given to its different articles, we can put a final stop to all discussion, since its reproduction on the plaques is merely a question of the workshop, where the craftsmen make a clean cut by adopting either the *interpretatio romana* or the *inter-*

---

[29] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 121.

*pretatio graeca.* All the same, in most cases the clothing of the Riders is of oriental type (Anatolia, Iran)—that is, the type created by Greek art for the representation of "barbarian" divinities from the 5th century B.C. onward which, finalized in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, was to become so widely diffused.[30] The Phrygian cap is a headdress very frequent on the two-Rider plaques found in Dacia (3, b; 4, b; 5-7; 11, A, b; 18, b; 19, b; 20, a; 25, a; 27, a; 42, b; 43, b; 47, a; 49; 200, b; 203, b; 204, b), but rarer in the other provinces. Often the graver's lack of skill gives it the form of a pileus. The cloak flying in the wind also appears on a whole series of plaques (7, a; 34, c; 37, b; 42, b; 48, b; 49; 50, b; 72, c; 97, 99, b; 113, b; 135, b; 137, c; 150; 155, b; 156, b; 176, b; 182, b; 187; 194, A, b; 195, a; 227, b; etc.). The sculptor sometimes omits the Riders' costume and in such cases they appear naked (189: 193, b; 197). In the same way the Phrygian cap is absent from the Pannonian lead plaques. Sometimes the Riders are naked while their heads are covered with Phrygian caps (153, b; 175, a; 178, a; 193, b; etc.). This anomaly would be explained if the clothing had been rendered by polychrome painting. We may note as an exception a crown of rays on their heads on the Terracina relief (176, b), where they are reproduced in the form of a solar triad. Some Pannonian lead plaques and others brought to light in the Romula-Oescus region treat the Riders' costume in a distinctive manner. There one of the Riders is dressed in military costume, wearing helmet and cuirass (34, c; 72, c; 75, b; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 199, b) and in only one case a *draco* (72, c), while the other is in oriental costume. Another plaque reproduced in three copies (36, b; 74, b; 75, b) shows the two Riders in the complete uniform of Roman soldiers (helmet, cuirass, shield, and *draco*). All these likewise wear the chlamys flying in the wind.

When the Riders are figured in the posture of victors striking at the enemy fallen under their horses' hooves, they are sometimes, less frequently, seen armed with the double axe (18, b; 146, b;

---

[30] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 177, 266ff. With deep folds (36, b; 37, b; 75, b; 83, b; 140, a; 162, c) it is also characteristic of Mithraic monuments from the lower Danube (Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 2247, 2252; Kazarow, *BSAB* II (1911), p. 55, no. 2 and Dölger, *Antike u. Christ.* IV, 1, p. 62ff.).

147, b; 148, b; 190, b; 191, b; 199, b; 204, b). Similarly with the spear (11, b; 19, b; 22, b; 42, b; 72, c; 125, c; 126, b; 188; 189; 194). In a single case the spears are placed vertically in front of them, in another case their weapons are behind them (126, c). The axe *bipennis* is a very ancient weapon and religious emblem, common to quite a number of gods, but characteristic of Jupiter Dolichenus.[31] They are also often seen raising their arms to strike without having anything in their hands. The weapon in question must have been filled in by polychromy on the marble monuments or by imagination in the case of the metal pieces. In many cases too one or both of the Riders raise their hands in salute to the Goddess (the *benedictio latina*: 34, c; 37, b; 57, b; 120, b; 121, b; 125, c; 126, c; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 150; 162, b; 188, 193, b; 197, a) or else simply hold the horses' reins (18, b; 41, b; 48, c; 71, a; 80, a; 104, a; 112, a; 114, a; 149; 155, a; 176, a; 182, b; 187; 191, b; 198, b).

Often seen in the hands of the victorious Riders is the *draco* standard, adopted by the Roman Army in the third century. This military ensign is composed of a vertical pole held by the Rider, at the top of which has been fixed horizontally the winding body of a snake. Sometimes the end of the pole is finished off with two small discs one on top of the other (149, a) or by a spear-point (49). The presence of this ensign on a monument does not prevent the snake being reproduced either close to the *draco* or in another register.[32] The *draco* may be carried by only one of the Riders (42, b), but much more often by both (49; 56, a; 73; 75, b; 104; 149; 188; 189; 195, a; 218). In one case (48, a) this military ensign appears in isolation.

I have already tried to show elsewhere[33] that the *draco* as a religious and military standard and as reproduced on the Danubian plaques does not come directly from the Scytho-Sarmatic[34] or Dacian worlds,[35] since the Roman craftsmen of the riparian provinces of the Danube only reproduce it on these monuments from the moment when the Roman Army had adopted it.[36] We must also bear in mind that the *draco* is absent from other cultic monuments of common occurrence in the Danubian provinces.

---

[31] Merlat, *JupDol*, p. 62ff.

[32] Buday, *op. cit.*, p. 121, puts non-existent objects in the Riders' hands. The *draco* is doubtful on the mon. 56, b and 104, a.

[33] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 236ff. and *Dacia* V (1961), p. 339.

[34] This is the opinion of A. Alföldi, *Daci e Romani in Transilvania*, Budapest 1940, p. 33.

[35] Vasile Pârvan, *Getica*, p. 64 and *CRAI*, 1926, p. 92 and Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 329.

For my part, I think the presence of this military ensign on the Danubian plaques is to be explained quite simply as due to chance. I think it resulted from a fortuitous combination of themes by the fancy of native sculptors. The Riders frequently carry spears, which they brandish obliquely or vertically to strike the enemies prostrate under their horses' hooves. But on a good number of these same reliefs we observe the heraldic presence of snakes flanking the head of the Goddess or the busts of the celestial deities. Usually the middle of the snakes' bodies is at the level of the spear shafts. It would have been enough for the snake once to touch this shaft inadvertently in order that these two separate elements should be combined and thus become the *dracones* borne by the Riders. A typical example of such a chance combination is provided by the engraved gem from Odescalchi (189), on which we cannot say definitely whether we have *dracones* or two spears with two snakes above them. Moreover, on the marble fragment from Tirgovişte (49), the Rider carries a *draco* in which the elements composing it remain individualized, since the spear-point is piercing the snake's body. We cannot interpret this image, as V. Pârvan would do,[37] as representing a victorious Rider brandishing a vanquished monster on his spearpoint, since the snake has never played such a part in the Danubian reliefs. Though in the Dacic religion it may have signified a demon of the air, in the Danubian Rider religion it never represented a demon of the storm and the underworld as Pârvan thought.[38]

The introduction of the *dracones* on the Danubian plaques took place in the third century A.D., when this ensign was adopted by the Roman armies. It was the age when the Danubian Rider cult was widespread among soldiers. Up to the time of the conquest of

---

[36] R. Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis z. Beginn d. Byzant. Themenverfassung*, Berlin 1920, p. 125 and F. Altheim, *Die Soldatenkaiser*, Frankfurt a.M. 1938, p. 182.

[37] V. Pârvan, *Getica*, p. 641.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 520ff.

Dacia, the *draco* was the ensign of the Dacian troops and can be seen in the hands of the soldiers of Decebalus in several of the scenes reproduced on Trajan's column.[39] When we compare it with that reproduced on the Danubian plaques, the emblem shows distinct differences. The *draco* of Trajan's column consists of a pole at the end of which several strips of material attached to a wolf's head flutter in the wind (no snake, therefore!)[40] On the Danubian plaques, on the other hand, although artistically inferior to the *draco* of the Column, the snake's body, without other attachments, appears clearly fixed to the pole.

There is no doubt that among the Dacians the *draco* must have been a protective symbol special to the army. At the height of battle the wolf's head, with its several metal tongues, made a shrill sound and its strips of material waved in the wind. Once taken over by the Roman army, the *draco* lost its fierce appearance together with its "voice" and its mobility, becoming no more than a mere religious and military ensign, mute and motionless at the end of its pole. Just because of the great importance of this symbol in the religious and military life of the Dacians, some writers have thought that it must have been directly adopted and reproduced on the Danubian plaques.[41] But a whole series of objections can be raised against such a hypothesis. First of all, as we have just seen, the dragon of the Dacians is clearly distinct from its congener of the Danubian plaques and from that used by the Roman army. Further, more than a century passed between the conquest of Dacia (A.D. 106) and the appearance of the symbol on the Danubian reliefs (first half of the third century). There is nothing to show that during this great lapse of time the *draco* had maintained itself against all comers as a military emblem specific to the conquered Dacian people. Moreover, if its origin as a sculptural theme of the Danubian plaques had been Dacian, it should have appeared in the first place on the most ancient reliefs, those of Class A. For the same reason the Danubian plaques cannot be evidence about the moment when the Roman army adopted as ensign the dragon specific to the Dacian, Sarmatian, or Parthian regions. All they prove is that it was used as such in the first half of the third century, that is at a time when this adoption had already taken place.[42] According to Fr. Altheim,[43]the appearance of this ensign in the Roman army coincided with the recruitment of nomad troops of central and southern Asian origin, and it was from this region that the image passed into China, Iran, and subsequently to the West. The Dacians and Germans would then have inherited it from the Sarmatian peoples.

---

[39] G. Cichorius, *Die Reliefs der Trajanssäule*, Berlin 1896 and 1900, pl. XXXI, 74-75; XLI, 144, 159; XLVIII, 170; LV, 198; LVII, etc. (= K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *Die Trajanssäule*, Berlin-Lipsca 1926, pl. 17, XXXI; 21, XXXVIII; 28, LIX; 30, LXIV; 31, LXVII; 35, LXXV; 37, LXXVIII etc.). In a like scene (Cichorius XXXI, 74-75 = Lehmann-Hartleben, 17, XXXI), the *draco* is borne by Dacian cavalry crossing the Danube by swimming with their horses. In another scene (Cichorius XX, 64-65 = Lehmann-Hartleben, 15, XXV), the *draco* is planted in the centre of a Dacian citadel and surrounded by several skulls of Roman prisoners killed by the Dacian women. On Trajan's column, the *draco* is the symbolic image of victory. But this ensign is absent from those pictures of the column illustrating Trajan's second war against the Dacians.

[40] See the descriptions of: Lucianus, *De consecr. hist.*, 29; Arrianus, *Tact.*, 35, 3; Vegetius, *De re milit.* II, 13 and *Amm. Marcellinus*, XVI, 10, 7. Cf. also Potier, *DSDict. Ant.* II, 1, p. 403ff; S. Reinach, *DSDict. Ant.* IV, 2, p. 1321; Fiebiger, *PWRE* V, 2, col. 1633ff. and especially Pârvan, *op. cit.*, p. 519ff. and 640ff.

[41] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 72ff. and Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 340; Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 23 is against this theory.

The snake standard of the two Danubian Riders was considered as the sign of their victory over the enemies trampled by their horses' hooves. It constituted also an ἀποτρόπαιον valued by the

[42] There are different opinions on the introduction of the *draco* into the Roman Army. Some authors accept a Parthian origin for it, others a Sarmatian origin: Fiebiger, *art. cit.* col. 1634; Reinach, *art. cit.*, p. 1321 and Pârvan, *op. cit.*, pp. 121 and 522 (who seeks to establish a link between the sky cult among the Dacians and the *draco* standard on the Danubian plaques). Today, many geographical and religious arguments can be invoked for the Geto-Dacian origin of the Danubian Rider religion, but it is impossible to attribute the same origin to the *draco*. On the Danubian Rider bas-reliefs it makes its appearance at a moment when it was already widespread in Roman sculpture. We possess no literary or archaeological document for its survival among the Geto-Dacians after the disappearance of the kingdom of Decebalus.

[43] Altheim, *op. cit.*, p. 182ff. The first sculptural representation of a *draco* (borne by a Roman soldier) dates from the time of Marcus Aurelius (*PWRE* X, col. 779ff. and *Röm. Mitt.*, 1937, p. 262, no. 2). It is well documented during the *decennalia* of Gallienus (*Vita Gall.*, 8, 6); Domaszewski, *Rhein. Mus.*, 57, p. 513ff. and Altheim, *loc. cit.*, with a generous bibliography.

soldiers, whose lives were constantly threatened by so many dangers at their posts on the frontiers of the Empire. Its role in mystery ceremonies must have been that of a protective symbol in the shelter of which the initiate passed all the ordeals of sin in his progress towards a new life. The respect and confidence which it inspired increased when it was proudly borne by soldiers. But we cannot say that its reappearance in Dacia, on the Danubian Rider plaques, revived in the native population an ancient memory of the religious and national sentiments aroused by it in their wars against the Romans.

And we have not yet reached the end of all the interpretations to which the different details of the scene of the two Danubian Riders have given rise. For instance, various explanations have been offered of the *benedictio latina* which they appear to give.[44] We note also that sometimes the Riders hold other objects in their hands than the shaft of a spear or a *draco* or the horses' reins, that is to say a rhyton (3, b; 47, a), a cup (83, b), or weapons and unidentified objects (46, 110).

Close attention must be given also to the costume worn by the Riders of the last Class (C), where they are seen as guests at the banquet, with a table in front of them bearing a ram's head or a cup (96, 98, 102, 103). On these Dobrudja plaques, all of marble, the two Riders, with big beards, have Phrygian caps on their heads and wear heavy clothing reminiscent of the dress worn by the Geto-Dacian native population at the time of Ovid's exile at Tomis.[45] We note also that this "winter dress" likewise appears in the divine banqueting scene figuring in the upper register of certain stone plaques of Class B from Dacia and Moesia (3, a; 11, A, a; 19, a; 50, a; 182, a).

---

[44] I do not agree with Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 7, who states that the two Riders are greeting Sol with raised hands. The nearness of the Goddess towards whom they look and face their horses and the isolation of Sol in an upper register invalidate his hypothesis.

[45] Concerning the beards and horses' manes of the Getae cf. Ovid., *Pont.*, I, 5, 74; III, 5, 6; IV, 2, 2 and *Trist.*, III, 10, 21-22 and V, 7, 180. This poet has given us details of the shaggy skins (like the "*touloupes*" of Russian mujiks) worn by the Getae. But the classical costume of the Danubian Riders (Phrygian cap, tunic, and chlamys) is of Oriental origin, diffused by Greek artists, as rightly argued by Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 177.

Lastly, for a thorough understanding of the Riders' warrior nature, further study must be made of certain other elements of the repertoire directly connected with them (the enemies under their horses' hooves, their attendants, Victoria, Nemesis, Hecate, etc.).

## C. The Enemies Prostrate under the Horses' Hooves

The Riders' mounts are carved according to the artistic capacities of each individual craftsman. Always in profile, the animals have their heads directed towards the hands of the Goddess or the skirts of her robe, from which they expect to be fed. Their bushy manes and their tails waving in the wind seem to indicate rapid movement (34, c; 35, c). Sometimes their very large ears seem like those of mules or donkeys (4, b; 19, b; 94). Often their reins are clearly visible (1, b; 18, b; 23, a; 24, a; 37, b; 41, b; 48, c; 49; 59, a; 71, a; 75, c; 77; 79; 87, 104, a; 106, b; 112, b; 122, a; 147, b; 150; 157, a; 174, b; 175, a; 176, b; 184, a; 187; 191, b) and in two cases the straps of their harness are decorated with metal overlays (164 and 153, b). Sometimes the Riders are mounted on a sort of saddle made of a folded blanket (18, b; 23, a; 24, a; 37, b; 65, a; 73, b; 113, b; 122, a; 147, b; 148, a; 175, a; 205, a).

It was once generally agreed that Rider-Gods would naturally arise among peoples given to the rearing of horses. Such peoples would tend to worship the horse and attribute an esoteric cult function to it. Recently, this connection between Rider-Gods and horse-rearing has been questioned. Yet whether or not we accept the connection, given a divinity with the horse as his symbol, the Rider-Huntsman fighting the forces of Evil would be the direct and immediate interpretation of him.[46]

The element constituting the fundamental difference between the representations of the Danubian Riders and those of the Thracian Rider, the Dioscuri, the Cabiri, and other equestrian divinities remains undoubtedly the presence of the enemies prostrate under the horses' hooves. We observe that the men prostrate and trampled by the horses of the Danubian Riders are always completely disarmed, in distinction from those figuring on other monuments of the same kind (such as the Rhineland funerary stelae). This prostrate enemy is lacking in only one case from the principal scene, on a Class A relief (45, b). Of course, on the plaques of this first category there cannot be more than one enemy since there is only one Rider. By contrast, in most cases on the two-Rider plaques, there will be two enemies biting the dust under each horse (cf. *CMRED* I, Index, p. 133). But from this group we must eliminate 23 pieces preserved in a fragmentary state (5, 20, 24, 26, 32, 38, 39, 65, 82, 89, 91, 95, 100, 152, 156, 157, 158, 161, 177, 178, 198, 200, 205). All the same, there are also a significant number of plaques with only one enemy trampled by the hooves of one of the Riders' mounts (27, a; 42, b; 47, a; 65, a; 78, a; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 173, a; 182, b). Almost always in these cases it is the left-hand Rider whose horse is trampling the fallen enemy. Sometimes the absence of the second enemy is justified by lack of space, as in certain engraved gems where the enemy appears only once, under the Goddess's feet (187, 195, a). There are cases also where he has been replaced by a fish (127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b), by a lion (27, a), or by a dog (182, b)[47] as companions in arms of the Rider. Frequently, too, the lion is attacking the fallen enemy under the horse's belly (12; 18, b; 59, b; 64, b; 77; 79; 80, a; 85, a; 87; 104, a; 118, a; 122, a; 153, b; 154, a; 181, a; 184, a; 218, b). Incidentally, the lion as companion of the chase appears likewise on the Thracian Rider reliefs.[48]

---

[46] See Will's discussion, *op. cit.*, p. 105: "Ainsi il n'existe pas de Dieux Cavaliers, mais seulement de Dieux représentés à cheval et plus exactement même, des Dieux des peuples cavaliers" (cf. also p. 123).

Frequently the enemies prostrate under the horses' hooves are naked (1, a; 18, b; 72, c; 81, b; 93; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 137, c; 146, b; 173, a; 175, a; 176, a; 187-189; 190, b; 191; 193, b; 194, a; 195, a; 228, c). However, the cases in which they appear wearing a simple tunic and a Phrygian cap (37, b; 200, b) are fairly numerous (2; 7, a; 17; 37, b; 40-46; 48, c; 71, a; 75, b; 87; 90; 122, a; 140, a; 174; 182, b). It seems that in a single case (177, a) one of the fallen enemies has a beard, but the others are always young men.

---

[47] The dog is doubtful, because the monument is known to us only by a drawing. The animal could be considered as introduced by chance into the repertoire of the Danubian plaques. It can only be vouched for on a lead plaque from Romula (34a), as a borrowing from the Mithraic repertoire or from that of the Thracian Rider, where the dog played an important part, apotropaic and chthonian, cf. Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 191; Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 12ff. and O. Keller, *Die antike Tierwelt*, Leipzig, 1909, I, p. 137ff. Toynbee, *JRS* XLVII (1957), p. 263, gave a mistaken interpretation of the fish and the snake under the horses' hooves (72, c; 127, c, 132, 135, b). I have shown (*ED* VII, pp. 218, 255, 266) that the two animals are elements of Good who help the Danubian Riders to fight against Evil.

[48] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 8.

It is noteworthy that the artist has never given these conquered enemies a monstrous appearance. They are always of human aspect. Similarly they are always unarmed and lacking in any other attribute. Finally, their position on the ground is not always the same. In the majority of cases they are lying face downward (1, b; 9, b; 16, b; 17; 18, b; 23, a; 38; 40; 42, b; 46; 55, b; 64, a; 75, b; 80; 87; 94; 113, b; 120, b; 126, b; 133, c; 137, c; 146, b; 148, a; 150; 157, a; 162, b, 173, a; 174; 176, a; 177, a; 182, b; 183, b; 188; 189; 194 A, a; 195, a; 228, b). Sometimes, the two enemies, or only one of them, have fallen on their backs (7, a; 12; 18, b; 29, c; 37, b; 39; 66, b; 80, a; 82, a; 127, c; 132, c; 135, b; 161, a; 190, b; 193, b). In some rare cases they are lying on their sides (2; 26, a; 48, c; 62, a; 71, a; 72, c; 77; 90; 93; 187). The vanquished men are not always motionless, with their arms stretched out along their bodies or under their heads as if they were dead; they may raise their arms (7, a; 66, b; 204, b) or their heads (26, a; 62, a; 93; 113, b; 137, c; 201, b; 203, b); sometimes they have their legs in the air as if they had just fallen (40; 120, b; 125, c; 162, b) or else they are trying to get up by leaning on their hands (183, b), and so on.

When they raise their arms, they seem to be asking for mercy. In certain cases, near the head of the fallen man and close to the horses' hooves we note the presence of an oblong object which must be a ram's head (2; 47, a; 62, a; 79; 87; 90; 97; 99, b; 100, a; 146, b). In none of these cases can there be any question of a tortoise as some older writers supposed.[49]

The men prostrate under the horses' hooves are the essential and distinctive element on the Danubian plaques compared with the reliefs of the Dioscuri. They have been identified with the element of Evil conquered by Good (represented by the Riders). But such a dualist explanation seems to me altogether too simple. It must be considered also with reserve in view of the fact that we know nothing precise about the myth of the Danubian deities. It could be inferred, from the fact that the vanquished men have no monstrous aspect and are not victims of any carnage, that we have to do with one divinity or hero opposed to another divinity or hero and having lost the battle. If these vanquished men were merely a personification of Evil, they would have a barbarian or monstrous aspect, like the representations of enemies trampled by horses on the Rhineland funerary stelae.[50]

---

[49] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 218. Rostovtseff's supposition (*Tablette du Louvre*, p. 17) of a presumed personage with a fish's tail (instead of legs), fallen under the horse (47a), is wrong.

An interesting peculiarity which appears only on a few of the Pannonian lead plaques replaces one of the fallen enemies by a great fish with the look of a dolphin (127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; etc.) In view of the sacral role of the fish in the Danubian Rider cult this cannot be interpreted as an enemy trampled by the horses' hooves but only as a companion at arms of one of the Riders (cf. above, p. 118ff). In a similar situation are the two snakes placed above the fallen enemies on the plaques from Romula and Oescus (35, c = 72, c); once more, these must be companions at arms of the two Riders. An analogous function has been attributed to the reptiles figuring on the Cades cameo, where the two slain enemies are lacking (197). On another engraved gem (194, B) the fallen enemy is placed under the feet of the goddess Nemesis, divinity of vengeance (cf. below, p. 130ff).

---

[50] Espérandieu, *Recueil-Gaule* IV, *passim*; F. Koepp, *Die Grabdenkmäler im Germania romana—ein Bilder-Atlas*, Bamberg, 1926, III, pl. VI-VIII. Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 15, looked for analogies between the Rhineland stelae and the Danubian tablets. Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 23, mistakenly identifies the Riders with the *mystae* flooring their enemy. On the nakedness of the prostrate enemies, cf. Suetonius, *Nero*, XLI, and for the same theme on the sculptural monuments of Pannonia and the Rhineland, see: Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1910, p. 316, fig. 2; Haug, *Westdeut. Zeitsch.*, X (1891), p. 327ff. and Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 158, n. 4. J. M. C. Toynbee, *JRS* XLVIII (1957), p. 262, writes: "But we cannot accept Will's view that the human forms outstretched beneath the Riders' horses are symbols of the evil powers conquered by the Gods." More difficult, however, and less acceptable is Toynbee's own theory: "Thus, the prostrate humans of Danubian monuments are likely to represent a ritual or simulated death or to be symbolic of death as the gateway to life beyond the grave."

The symbolic sense generally conceded in regard to the persons fallen under the horses' hooves is that of victory or vengeance (hence the presence of Nemesis) of Good against Evil, and the triumph of Life over Death[51]—a very frequent idea in ancient art. In Picard's view this sculptural theme must have been imported into the Balkan peninsula from the Roman funerary stelae of the Rhineland region. It was studied in great luxury of detail by Will,[52] who after pursuing it to the Orient and across the classical Graeco-Roman world, reached the conclusion that there could be no question of its having been imported from the West, in view of the fact that it was a "commonplace theme" in the model-book of all the provincial stone-carvers. However, in the case of the Danubian plaques it cannot be regarded as a "commonplace theme", since it constitutes the fundamental element in their identification, as Will himself recognizes.[53] In fact, seeing that on the Danubian reliefs it is an undoubted part of the story of the principal myth of the Rider-Gods, it cannot be interpreted as a "commonplace theme" borrowed fortuitously by the sculptors to fill up their empty spaces. The presence of this theme marks the culminating moment of the heroic deeds performed by the Riders. Thus it symbolized for the votaries of the cult—civilian or military—the certainty of the triumph over Evil in this life and in the life beyond death.

## D. The Attendants

Another element which may illustrate the subject of the three Danubian divinities is that of their attendants. These are the immediate helpers of the Goddess and the two Riders in the main scene of the reliefs.

---

[51] Chapouthier, *REA* XLI (1939), p. 68, n. 1; Mladenova, *Studia Dečev*, p. 555; Ch. Picard, *RHR* CL (1956), p. 22ff. and Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 93.

[52] Will, *op. cit.*, p. 96. Cf. also Marcadé, *REA*, 1957, p. 171ff.

[53] Will *op. cit.*, p. 93.

## 1. *Victoria*

The warlike and triumphal character of the three deities is defined above all by the presence of the goddess of Victory. She is found on plaques of both classes A and B. She constantly stands upright behind one or even both of the Riders, placing a crown on their heads (22, b; 28, a; 47, a; 48, b; 50, b; 59, a; 75, b; 77; 83, b; 97; 149; 199; 210, a; 228, a). Her portrait shows nothing out of the ordinary in comparison with personifications current at the time. In one case she is seen holding a palm branch in her hands (149), in another a spear (83, b). She is never reproduced in the lower register scenes of the Danubian plaques.

This appearance of the goddess *Victoria* on the Danubian reliefs cannot be considered as an importation from the iconography of the Dioscuri as Chapouthier suggests.[54] Nor has she the significance of an immortality symbol in the mysteries, as Benoit[55] claims, for she never figures in the mystery scenes. It was an element much too usual in the art of the period to be assigned any other function than that of an image of victory. But her presence on the Danubian reliefs is a new argument in favour of the military character of the cult. This allegory was nowhere so widespread as on the Lower Danube,[56] where Victoria was often worshipped for the same reason as Mars and the other warrior deities. The monuments dedicated to her in this region were built towards the end of the 2nd century and especially during the 3rd century A.D., that is to say, at the very moment when her image began to appear on the Danubian plaques. It was the age when we observe a quite particular enthusiasm for this goddess even among Roman veterans.[57] Thus there is no doubt that it was the soldiers who introduced her into the Danubian reliefs, at the same time as the images of other warrior deities.

---

[54] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 68, n. 1.

[55] Benoit, *Heroïs. équestre*, p. 52.

[56] *CIL* III; *Dacia*, 1072; 1158 = *ILS* 2477; 1365; 1416; 1442; 7687; 7842 etc.; *Pannonia*: *CIL* III, 3346; 4168 = *ILS* 7118; 10766; 11082; 12013; 13439 = *ILS* 9122, etc.; cf. also A. Mócsy, *PWRE*, Suppl. IX, col. 734; *Noricum*: *CIL* III, 4564; 4811-4814 (= *ILS*, 2524); 5944; 11743, etc.; *Moesia inf.*: *CIL* III, 5565 = *ILS* 664; 5612; 5615; 13718 = 3093; etc.; *Dalmatia*: 1979, etc. Rarely met with on the Mithraic monuments of the Danube region (cf. Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 430 B; 1181; 12921; 1593; Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 150 and 194; Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 434 (index) where it is often replaced by a crown borne in his hands by the Iranian god. As a symbol of military power, the image of Victory is often reproduced in Dolichenian sculpture, cf. Merlat, *JupDol*, 432, and *RépJupDol*, pp. 34, 130, 134 etc.

### 2. *Mars*

The god of war does not appear on the Class A plaques, but only on those with two Riders (Class B). At first, apparently, we see in his place a simple *hoplophoros*, anarmed attendant accompanying his master (cf. below, p. 155). Two roles are assigned to him in the iconography of the Danubian gods. At first he is the attendant of one of the Riders (34, a; 81, b; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 150; 199, b), but on a plaque from Hrtkovć (recently published by Oschsenschlager) Mars appears for the first time in the *criobolium* register, indicating a certain rank in the mysteries (146, c). On the Romula plaques (34, c and 72, c) it is one of the Riders who wears the costume of the god of war. Moreover, one of the attendant of one of the Riders appears in one case (125, c) armed with what seems to be the club of Heracles, which would indicate an association with the hero on that monument (?).

Mars can be identified by the classic uniform of a Roman soldier (helmet, cuirass, shield, and spear). This is the external aspect of the god also on other religious monuments in the area of diffusion of our cult.[58] We cannot for the moment determine whether the reproduction of Mars on the Danubian reliefs is due to borrowing from other iconographic repertoires or to an initiative of native craftsmen. In fact, the cult of the warrior deities was always widespread in the Danubian provinces, a natural consequence of the numerous encounters on the *limes* and the countless dangers to which the soldiers there were exposed, particularly during the period of military anarchy. Their dangerous life prompted them to worship in common all the war deities, whom they tended to group together on the same epigraphic or sculptured monuments, as we see them on the plaque of Jupiter Dolichenus found at Kömlöd. The epigraphic documents relating to the cult of Mars in the Danubian provinces are of great abundance.[59]

---

[57] Graillot, *DSDict. Ant.* V, p. 840ff. and Domaszewski, *Relig. röm. Heeres*, p. 37ff.

[58] In the Mithraic repertoire he figures among the Olympic gods and is never found in the posture attendant (Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 1128, 1137, 1177, 1182, 1292, 1430, 1475, 2202, 2338, 2340 etc.; Domaszewski, *Relig. röm. Heeres*, pl. IV, 2; Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 105 and Vulić *RA*, 1933, p. 188 and 193). Dolichenian iconography shows him in association with military gods (Merlat, *JupDol*, nos. 65, 148, 168 etc.). The most characteristic is the Kömlöd plaque (*ibid.*, pl. IV, 2-3). Inscriptions often mention his name side by side with that of Victory; cf. *CIL* III, 1098; 1600 = *ILS*, 3159; 4412; 5193 = *ILS*, 4861; 5790 = 7309, a; 5897; 5898; 10436; 11889, etc.

In the third century Nemesis too was worshipped in these regions but appears in the company of Mars only on the Danubian plaques.

The popularity of Mars in these parts can be more fully understood if we remember that for some centuries already Ares (= Mars) had been, in the company of Artemis and Dionysus, one of the national deities of the Thracian world.[60] He could thus easily be accepted at the time of Roman domination and under the Empire found his place above all in the military pantheon.[61] The ram and

[59] *Dacia*: *CIL* III; 793 = *ILS*, 2495; 897 = *ILS*, 3161; 1080; 1098; 1433 = *ILS*, 7129; 1600 = *ILS* 3159; 6273; 6279; = *ILS*, 3154; 7718; 7854; 12577, etc.; *RA*, 1903, 217, 1912, 74; 1930, 12 (= 1931, 118 = 1933, 8); etc. *Pannonia*: *CIL* III: 3232 = *ILS*, 407, 3235; 3469; 3470 = *ILS*, 2453; 4411; 4412; 6457; 10256, a; 10430 = *ILS*, 3095; 10435 = *ILS*, 2363; 10436; 10831; 10844 = *ILS*, 4574; 10996, a; 11721; 13410; 14072; 14355; 15180 etc.; *RA*, 1920, 61; cf. also Mócsy, *PWRE*, Suppl. IX, col. 730; *Moesia inf.* *CIL* III, 12467 (the Adamclissi trophy); *RA*, 1903, 288; etc. *Noricum*: *CIL* III; 5097; 5098 = *ILS*, 4567; 5193; = *ILS*, 4861, 5301; 5307; 5321; 5645; 11815 = *ILS*, 4575; 13522, etc.; *RA*, 1930, 82 etc. *Dalmatia*: *CIL* III, 8431; 10109; 14219; 14255; 14321, 2, etc.; *RA*, 1910, 214; 1925, 56, etc. Inscriptions and sculptural representations show the cult of Mars widely distributed in the principal military centres of the Danubian provinces, Dacia and Pannonia. We note that geographically this area corresponds with the area of diffusion of the Danubian Rider cult. Concerning the cult of Mars in general, see: Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*, p. 138; Domaszewski, *Relig. röm. Heeres*, p. 33; Rose, *Encycl. of. Relig. and Ethics*, 12, p. 325ff.; Roscher, *Lex*, II, 2, col. 238f. Durrbach, *DSDict. Ant.*, III, 2, p. 1607 and specially Heichelheim, *PWRE* XIV, col. 1919f. On the most characteristic epithets of the god of war cf. Wissowa, *loc. cit.* et Rose, *loc. cit.*

[60] Herodotus, V, 7; cf. Rose, *art. cit.*, p. 325ff.

[61] Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 34f.; Durrbach, *art. cit.*, p. 1622; Roscher, *Lex.*, col. 2395f. et Heichelheim, *art. cit.*, col. 1926f.

the bull so familiar on the Danubian plaques were sacrifices to him also.[62]

The importance of the part played by Mars in the life of the soldiers in certain garrisons of the Danubian *limes* is brought out by the Romula plaques, on which one of the Riders is assimilated to Mars *equester* (34, c; 72, c). By contrast on the Pannonian plaques (127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b) the god of war fills the subordinate role of attendant to one of the Danubian Riders. The same plaques inform us that by his means the rank of *miles* had been created in the secret cult of this religion (cf. below, p. 253). This partial fusion followed by the subordination of Mars to the Danubian Riders was possible owing to the warlike character of the two groups of deities.

A great number of the pictorial elements in the repertoire of the Danubian plaques attest their military character.[63] With every increase in the cult's hold on the Danubian regions we note additions to the artistic and religious innovations brought to it by the soldiers. The pantheon of the Lower Danube camps gave the plaques Mars, Nemesis, and Victoria—above all military deities (a phenomenon brought out particularly by Hampel and Rostovtseff). It was the soldiers too who in the third century put the *draco* in the Riders' hands and designated a rank in the cult mysteries *Miles*. It was after all always the military element which took the lead in intensifying the religious and artistic contribution to the Danubian plaques and organizing their mysteries. On the other hand, solar beliefs were enriched there under the influence of emperors addicted to Mazdaism during the period of military anarchy, and above all under the emperors of Illyrian origin. The Danubian camps during this period raised a number of emperors to the throne. During the crisis which was tearing the empire apart the bravest soldiers were those of the Lower Danube and it was they who saved Rome in the time of the Illyrian emperors.

Even before this in these provinces, strongly impregnated as they were with mysticism, a sort of religious psychosis had arisen, which aroused in Heliogabalus a desire to place the celebration of the nuptials of his deified favourite with *Dea Caelestis* on the shores of the Danube and nowhere else.[64] The rare Danubian plaques found in Italy, Gaul, and Britain were carried there solely by soldiers transferred from one garrison to another. We see then a repetition of the phenomenon occurring on the Rhine, to which the young Thracian recruits imported the cult of Sabazius, the Syrians those of Jupiter Dolichenus, Heliopolitan Jupiter, and Mithras, the Celts the cult of Epona and so on.[65] The dogma of the combat between Good and Evil, the dualism manifest on the Danubian plaques was perfectly adapted to the situation of the Roman soldiers of the Lower Danube. They incessantly confronted the numerous dangers of the Barbarian invasions. It was these which prompted them to invoke the deities capable of saving their lives and giving them victory over their enemies. The uncertainty of the morrow induced them to entrust their fate to the practice of occult rites, of magic and astrology, such as can be detected on the Danubian plaques—naive speculations increasing in number with every circumstance that aggravated them in the Danubian regions. The map of the distribution of these plaques shows that the great garrisons, the greater number of whose members were recruited in the Orient, also furnished the most numerous votaries.

---

[62] Roscher, *Lex*, col. 2439.

[63] A character specially emphasized by Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 23 and by Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 291ff.

But in any case it is clear that Mars was one of those associated with this cult and not its *patronus*.

## 3. *The Lesser Attendants*

The warlike character of the Goddess and the Riders is further emphasized by their retinue, composed in certain cases of several civilian attendants, but armed with swords, daggers, or clubs (?) (9, b-two; 14; 55, b; 112, b; 125, c).[66] On some of the plaques we find quite a number of personal attendants of the Riders (*1, b; 3, b;*

---

[64] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 24.

[65] H. Lehner, *Bonner Jahrb.*, 129 (1924), p. 38f.

[66] The inaccurate drawing of an engraved gem contains four attendants each bearing a spear. Rostovtseff's statement (*Tablette du Louvre*, p. 8) that on the Class B Danubian tablets a woman and a man figure regularly as attendants does not agree with the facts (34, c; 182, b; etc.).

*9, b; 11, A, b; 15, b; 19, b; 22, b; 27, a; 28, a; 29, c; 34, c; 45, b; 46, b; 47, a; 54, b; 55, b; 58, a; 59, a; 64, a; 66, b; 71, a; 72, c; 75, b; 77; 79; 81, b; 91; 97; 99, b; 104, a; 106, b; 107, b; 110, b; 112, b; 113, b; 114, a; 115, a; 125, d; 126, d; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 137, b; 140, a; 146, b; 147, b; 148, b; 149; 150; 162, c; 171, c; 174, b; 182, b; 183, b; 184, a; 189; 190, b; 191, A, b; 192, A, b; 194, A, b; 198, b; 199, b; 200, b; 202, B; 203, b; 227, b*). The Goddess too has her personal attendants (*1, b; 9, b; 10, b; 16, b; 17; 29, c; 33; 46, b; 64, b; 106, b; 108, b; 174, b; 183, b; 200, b; 201, a; 202, A, b; 203, b*). Of course, it is only on the Class A plaques that the demands of iconography have allowed the presence of attendants at the goddess's side. Moreover it must be noted that only on plaques of this category (A) are the attendants more numerous and their costumes and the objects they carry more varied. Generally they are men in the prime of life, bearded and wearing the same dress as the Rider. Their number is reduced to a maximum of two on the Class B monuments, since the introduction of a second Rider sensibly diminishes the available space. For the same reason they disappear completely from the monuments of Class C.

Serving the Rider warriors there were also other attendants, not at their side on the reliefs but just behind their horses or in front of the Goddess. Their number may range from one to five and they too are usually dressed like their master (tunic and sometimes the Phrygian cap) (3, b; 9, b; 16, b; 25, c; 45, b; 110, b; 112, b; 140, a; 147, b; 182, b; 183, b; 189; 202, c; 203, c). A separate note is struck in this last group by the attendant on the bronze found in Rome (174, a). The man, bearded, wears an identical dress to that of his master (Phrygian cap, tunic held by a belt, and *calcei*). In his right hand he holds up the ram's head and in his left the mask of a man (?). Another attendant on the same piece, placed behind the Goddess, this time bare-headed, also holds up an object (a torch?). When the figures are reproduced with a *pileus* on their heads instead of the Phrygian cap (19, b; 50, b; 108, b) it is very probably because the sculptor had not the skill to carve a Phrygian cap.

We have quite a few examples, too, of the possible borrowing of attendants from the Thracian Rider and Mithras monuments. Among them is the attendant grasping with both hands the horse's tail (29, c; 107, b; 183, b; 200, b; 203, b) just as on some of the Thracian Rider reliefs.[67] Or else, on a bronze plaque from Lower Dacia (46), there are two attendants framing the principal scene, clothed in Phrygian costume and posed in the attitudes of Cautes and Cautopates, with legs crossed and the arms sketching the movement of raising and lowering a torch—as they are usually seen on the Mithraic monuments.[68] In some rare cases an attendant raises his arm in salute to his divine masters (34, b; 126, c; 162, b). These attendants in two cases are placed behind a column, at the back of a Rider, where they are very probably performing a mystic ritual.[69] Rarely, they are carrying peaceable or ritual objects, such as the rhyton (45, b; 200, b) or the cup (10, b; 29, c; 183, b). But there are a number of plaques, especially among those carved in stone, where the craftsman's lack of skill has made it impossible to identify the function and costume of the attendants (37; 47, a; 55, b; 54, a; 66, b; 71, a; 97; 100, b; 108, b; 112, b; 137, c; 181, a; 184, a; 191-192; 193, b; 198, b).

It follows from the repertoire just considered that so far as the type and attitude of the attendants are concerned they could be borrowed even on the earliest plaque either from the iconography of the Thracian Rider, or from that of Mithras—in agreement with other artistic influences as well. By contrast, the reliefs of the Dioscuri cannot have played any part in this respect, because Castor and Pollux were never accompanied. The idea of framing the principal deities with attendants is of Oriental-Semitic origin.[70] It was the two cults mentioned above which caused its adoption on the Danubian Rider reliefs. As servants of the three Danubian deities, the attendants were there to help them in the fight, which is why they were armed. In the peaceful scenes the attendants carry only the symbols of the respective deities and different cult objects (the ram's head, the fish, the rhyton, the masks, etc.). By syncretism these attendants were little by little transformed into certain important divinities who had entered service with the Danubian gods (Mars, Nemesis, Victoria, etc.). It is absolutely certain that the attendant putting her hand to her lips represents Nemesis and that the soldier is to be identified with Mars, no matter what the various theories advanced about them.[71] It is due to Rostovtseff that the true nature of these attendant deities has been once for all elucidated, together with their relations to the three principal deities.[72]

---

[67] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 9.

[68] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 27f.

[69] See below, p. 236. We may presume the same situation on two fragments from Carnuntum (147, b; 148, b), where the attendants are placed behind a column. Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 11f., identified these as sacred precincts marked off by columns. But it seems to me that all we have in this case is an ornamental architectural framework, well known on the Danubian tablets from Pannonia (see above, p. 67; 97). It was the lack of space which caused the sculptors to place the attendants behind the column. Besides, a sacred precinct would have been placed in the lower registers reserved for the cult and mystery scenes.

[70] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 207, n. 2.

## 4. *Nemesis and Hecate*

The goddess of justice and vengeance of wrongs had an important part to play in the myth, the cult, and the mysteries of the Danubian Riders. She could be identified by the first investigators of these monuments thanks to her characteristic gesture; a hand put to her lips.[73] This is indeed a characteristic feature of sculptural representations of the goddess: the right hand put to her lips invites silence, order, and moderation.[74]

In the principal scene, Nemesis is the attendant of the Goddess, wearing the chiton and himation with long skirts. She also appears in the lower registers in occult scenes. She is seen likewise in the upper register among the celestial divinities. Appropriately, she is not reproduced in the plaques of Class C, devoted entirely to the divine banquet.

---

[71] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 56, identifies the soldier-attendant with the rank of *Miles* and the attendant in Persian costume bearing the rhyton with another degree in the Mithraic mysteries, the *Perses*. Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 15, accepts this hypothesis and calls the woman attendant putting her right hand to her lips Σιγή.

[72] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 8.

[73] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 50, saw in the woman putting her hand to her lips a priestess of the cult; Hampel, *BdRég*, 1904, p. 41 and *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 314, a simple worshipper; Ziehen, *loc. cit.*, a Σιγή—Nemesis, while Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 124, speaks of Nemesis alone.

[74] Rossbach, Roscher, *Lex* III, 1 col. 144 (s.v. Nemesis). The affinity between Nemesis and the three principal deities on the Danubian tablets is manifested by the common ὕβρις against the enemies fallen under the horses' hooves, cf. Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 242f. See also Rubenson, *AA*, 1905, p. 69, fig. 2 (= Reinach, *Rép. sculp.* IV, 235, 1); Perdrizet, *BCH* XXXVI (1912), p. 250; Kubitschek, *Jahrb. für Altertumskunde* VI, 1-2 (1912), p. 5; Kazarow, *PWRE*, VI, A, col. 526 and T. Hopfner, *Pisciculi*, p. 125f.

The goddess of vengeance plays the part of the Goddess's attendant, positioned behind her, in the Class A pieces (1, b; 9, b; 10, b; 16, b, 17; 33; 64, a; 108, b; 110, b; 202, A, b; 203, b). Often she herself is accompanied by an attendant bearing a vase. In the principal scene she may also play the part of the Rider's attendant (58, a; 59, a; 64, a; 79; 106, b). In only one case, Nemesis replaces the Goddess welcoming the Rider (183, b). Her presence in the lower registers has only been recorded once, in the scene of the sacrifice of the ram on the altar (55, c). It is to be noted that Nemesis is never represented twice on one and the same plaque (I am speaking still of Class A) nor in the upper register of the earliest plaques.

A much more important place has been assigned to Nemesis by the sculptors and votaries of the cult on the Class B plaques, where she is to be seen in numerous variants. Owing to the fact that the Goddess now has her fixed place between the two Riders, the figure of Nemesis can no longer appear as attendant directly behind her mistress, for lack of space. This does not in the least mean that she has lost her quality of attendant of the Goddess in these Class B plaques. It is very possible that her presence, sometimes repeated as attendant of the two Riders, is a precise allusion to her ancient function (as the Goddess's attendant). She is seen in the main panel of the reliefs as well as in the mystery and cult scenes of the lower register and in rare cases also among the celestial divinities.

But on most occasions Nemesis appears as attendant of one of the two Riders (71, a; 73, b; 81, b; 83, b; 112, b; 127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b; 137, c; 146, b; 189; 194, a; 199, b) and less frequently as attendant of both Riders together (72, c; 75, b; 99, b; 190, b; 218, b; 192, b; 228, b). In the upper registers she is most often found on certain lead roundels, accompanying the busts of Sol and Luna (48, a; 57, b; 120, b; 125, b; 126, b; 162, b; 171, b). In a single case she there accompanies the triad of busts (198, a). When Nemesis occurs near the tripod with the fish or other offerings, the scenes in question are always in a lower register (7, b; 155, c; 173, b; 177, b). Nemesis is never absent from the scene representing the sacral death (*occultatio*), which is always placed in the lower registers of the plaques (3, c; 18, c; 23, b; 24, b; 25, b; 28, c; 31, b; 32, b; 47, b; 50, c; 62, b; 76, b; 82, b; 95, b; 100, b; 118, b; 154, b; 175, b; 182, c; 184, b; 207, b). Her presence in this spot is in accordance with the character of the ritual (cf. below, p. 244). In some cases, for this important moment of the initiation ritual, she is seen in company with the cock and the globe (50, c; 62, b; 182, c; 184, b)[75] or else without attributes (3, c; 18, c; 25, b; 32, b; 47, b; 95, b; 100, b; 118, b; 119, b; 160, b; 175, b; 202, b).

Of great importance for the true meaning of certain magical and chthonic practices of the Danubian Rider cult is the association of Nemesis with *Hecate triformis*, as revealed to us on an engraved gem (194, b), The two goddesses, reproduced with their characteristic attributes, are shown trampling underfoot an enemy completely naked, prostrate face to the around. They are surrounded with indecipherable inscriptions.[76]

As these iconographic data show, the association of Nemesis with the Danubian Rider cult is attested from the very first phase of its artistic and religious products. As the place of Nemesis in the beliefs of the Danube soldiers became more and more important, so her occurrence in cult and mystery scenes increased. Her popularity in the Danubian provinces is reflected by the great number of monuments dedicated to her.[77] This popularity is intimately bound up with the frequency of garrisons in the region, a phenomenon specific also—as we know—to the diffusion of the cult of Mars and the Danubian Riders themselves. The military still under arms and the veterans gave her a whole series of epithets, such as: *sancta,*[78] *Augusta,*[79] *omnipotens,*[80] *exaudentissima,*[81] *regina,*[82] *regina Augusti,*[83] *victrix,*[84] etc. Her sanctuaries are situated close to military camps and amphitheatres.[85] The worship of the goddess near amphitheatres is even a characteristic feature of her cult on the Danube. In the amphitheatre the gladiator, like the soldier facing the Barbarians, was in danger of his life, and it was this which prompted him to

---

[75] Tudor, *loc. cit.* Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 13, also identifies the griffin of Nemesis on two Danubian tablets (55, e; 62, b); but the animal's outline could also be seen as another quadruped (lion, dog, etc.). The globe is often shown beside Nemesis in other representations of this divinity. In interpreting one inscription (*CIL* IV, 592), Perdizet (*loc. cit.*) has identified this globe with the world-map variety (cf. also Schlachter-Gisinger, *Der Globus*, Berlin 1927, p. 93). For the images and attributes most characteristic of Nemesis see Perdizet, *op. cit.*, fig. 1; Volkmann, *ARW* XXXV (1928), p. 297, no. 2 and Schweitzer *JDAI* XLVI (1931), p. 194ff.

[76] For a similar representation at Alexandria cf. Volkmann, *ARW* XXXVI (1929), p. 296 and Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

[77] *Dacia*: *CIL* III, 794; 825; 826; 902; 1124; 1125 = *ILS* 3736; 1126 = 3744; 1304; 1358; 1438; 1547 = *ILS* 3747; 7633; 7767; 7857; 8020; 13777; 13778; 13779; 13780; 14474; *AÉp.*, 1930, 6; 1914, 122; *ÖJh*, 1900, Beibl. p. 179; *ARW*, 1928, p. 315, nr. 45 and 1934, p. 57f.; cf. again D. Tudor, *OR*$^3$,

p. 399ff. et M. Macrea, Viaţa în Dacia romană. Bucureşti 1969, p. 362. *Pannonia*: *CIL* III, 3484; 3485; 4008 = *ILS* 3746; 4161; 10831; 10439 = *ILS* 3741; 10440-10442; 10911; 10939; 11121 = *ILS* 3743; 11153; 13423; 14071; 14073-14077; 14357; 14358; 14358, 1; 15136; 15191; 15192.*AÉp*, 1929, p. 424; *AEMÖ*, 1897, p. 205f.; 236f. and 229f.; *Bericht Röm. Germ. Kommiss*, XV, p. 228; *Limes Österr.* XVI, p. 124; *ARW*, 1928, p. 313, 1934, p. 61 and *PWRE*, Suppl. IX, col. 732. *Noricum*: *CIL* III, 4805; 4738 = *ILS* 3745. *Moesia*: *CIL* III, 8107; 8108; 14208 etc. Toutain, *Cult. païens* I p. 393, had catalogued (1907) nearly 50 inscriptions dedicated to Nemesis of which only six had been found outside the Danubian provinces. Cf. also Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*, p. 315; Herter, *PWRE* XVI, 2, col. 2360ff.; Rossbach, Roscher, *Lex.* III, 1, col. 177f.; Legrand, *DSDict.Ant.*, IV, 1, p. 52ff.; Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 13, n. 3; Volkmann, *ARW*, 1928, p. 297ff. etc.

[78] *CIL* III, 8108.

[79] *CIL* III, 1304; 3484; 4161; 4738 = *ILS* 3745; 10911; 10939; 11153; 13423; 13779 etc.

[80] *CIL* III, 10441 = *ILS* 3740.

[81] *CIL* III, 1126 = *ILS* 3744.

[82] *CIL* III, 1438; 7633; 7767; 14071; 14075; 14076; 14358. The epithet shows us her importance in war and in the army, cf. Rossbach in Roscher, *Lex.* III, 1, col. 160.

[83] *CIL* III, 4008 = *ILS* 3746.

[84] *CIL* III, 8028.

[85] Sanctuaries of the goddess near military camps are known at Apulum (*CIL* III, 14474); Cășei—Dacia (*CIL* III, 825); Micia (unpublished find); *Pons Augusti* (*CIL* III, 1547 = *ILS* 3747); Sucidava (*AÉp.* 1914, 122); *Carnuntum* (*CIL*, 14071; 14357); *Aquincum* (*CIL* III, 10439-10442). In the neighbourhood of amphitheatres cult places of Nemesis have been found at: *Carnuntum* (11121 = *ILS*, 3743; 14358); *Sarmizegetusa* (*CIL* III, 13777; 13780); *Micia, Porolissum* etc. Other cult buildings for Nemesis: *CIL* III, 902; 1124; 1304; 1358; 1438; 1547 = *ILS* 3747; 3484; 4161; 8028; 10911; 10939; 11154; 14072-14076. For the sanctuary of Aquincum (the most important on the Danube), cf. J. Szilágyi, *Aquincum*, Budapest 1956, p. 81 and 88.

pray for the protection of this deity. Even in time of peace the amphitheatre was a sort of rough school preparing the future fighter for the horrors of war and accustoming him to the sight of bloodshed.[86]

In the company of Nemesis other divinities too are met with in the pantheon of the Danube soldiers: Juno,[87] Mars Augustus,[88] Fortuna,[89] Diana,[90] as well as Hecate,[91] Helios,[92] Kronos,[93] and Cybele[94]—likewise known as figuring on the Danubian plaques. Nemesis was considered as sovereign over the world's destinies, protectress of Good and Justice, and at the same time the implacable enemy of all those who did not respect her laws or exceed the bounds fixed by nature and destiny. This aspect of the goddess attached itself to the naive picture of his duty entertained by the soldier of a Danube garrison. The Barbarians appeared to him precisely as disrespectful of the order imposed by Nemesis. That was the very reason he had to fight them without mercy under the aegis of the goddess of Justice. It explains why the soldiers associated Nemesis with the Danubian Rider cult, whose deities were equally at war with the wrongful and destructive element. To begin with, her place on the Danubian plaques was close to the Goddess with whom she was confused in many interpretations by the phenomenon of syncretism. In this way she appears as sharing the victory with the single Rider on the oldest reliefs. Lack of space on the Class B plaques transformed her into an attendant, relegated to a place behind the Riders.

Nemesis was also to be confused in the Danubian provinces with Artemis-Diana.[95] Owing to this syncretistic phenomenon we find appearing on the Danubian plaques the celestial religious elements proper to the goddess of the chase. The phenomenon was helped along by the positioning of Artemis beside Nemesis, and all the more because she too was an underworld deity.[96] This character, together with that of a sorceress[97], is shown especially by a study of the engraved gems (187, a; 189; 194, A-B).

---

[86] A. v. Premerstein, *Philologus* VII, (1894), p. 400ff.; Zingerle, *AEMÖ* XX (1897), p. 228ff. et Manzini, *L'omicidio rituale e i sacrifici umani*, Torino 1921, p. 14. Volkmann, *ARW* XXXV (1928), p. 312ff., supplies valuable data on the role of Nemesis as protectress of the shows in Danubian amphitheatres (cf. id., *ARW*, 1934, p. 73ff.).

[87] *CIL* III, 11121 = *ILS* 3743.

[88] *CIL* III, 10831, cf. again Herter, *PWRE* XVI, 2, col. 2377.

[89] *CIL* III, 10831; 1125 = *ILS* 3736.

[90] *CIL* III, 10440 = *ILS* 3742; 14076.

[91] Herter, *art. cit.*, col. 2378.

[92] *Ibid.*

[93] *Ibid.*

[94] Graillot, *Cybèle*, p. 204.

[95] Zingerle, *AEMÖ*, 1897, p. 228. Premerstein, *Philologus*, 1894, p. 407. Sol and Luna are also shown on these monuments: Cf. Zingerle, *art. cit.*, p. 230.

The enemy prostrate under the feet of Nemesis and Hecate on the same engraved gem (194, B) is matched by analogous themes on other monuments.[98] It is the vengeance of Nemesis which is asserted in the image of the man prostrate under the horses' hooves. The presence of Hecate, completed by the magical inscription, tells us that this vengeance is accomplished with the help of the *Dea Triformis*, endowed with magical powers stronger than those of Nemesis. We recall that from the moment when the Dioscuri became underworld divinities, they too were seen in association with Hecate.[99]

There is also another religious aspect of Nemesis indicated on the Danubian plaques, that is to say in the scenes of sacrifice or of other magical and occult practices. But in this case she is no longer appearing in the hypostasis of a goddess of vengeance. Here, rather, she is invoked as goddess of silence, guardian of the secret which the participants in the ritual must also strictly keep. The mysteries impose at every stage of their celebration the uttermost secrecy on the initiates, the silence of death.[100] Silence and secrecy was exactly what Nemesis impersonated,[101] which is why she was present at the culminating moments of the mysteries depicted on the Danubian plaques. The frequency of her representation on the Danubian plaques attest the ultra-secret and mysterious character of the three principal divinities.

---

[96] Posnansky, *Nemesis und Adrasteia*, Breslau 1890, p. 27ff. et Volkmann, *art. cit.*, 1928, p. 310ff.

[97] Rossbach, Roscher *Lex.* III, 1, col. 117 et Herter, *art. cit.* col. 2371. Her functions in magical practices are numerous in the period when magic had developed in the Danubian Rider cult (3rd-4th centuries).

[98] Delamarre *RA*, 1894, p. 266; Perdrizet, *BCH*, 1912, p. 263; Cook, *Zeus* II, p. 863; Volkmann, *ARW*, 1928, p. 302ff.; 1934, p. 61ff. and Schweitzer, *JDAI* XLVI (1931), p. 187 and 214; Rubensohn, *AA*, 1905, p. 69, fig. 2 = Reinach, *Rép. de la sculpture* IV, 235, 1.

[99] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 153 and no. 69.

[100] Pseudo Jamblichus, *De myst.*, VIII, 3; Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* II, 34; *Doct. herm* I, 10, 5; cf. also Dieterich, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[101] Dieterich, *op. cit.*, p. 42f. et Turchi, *Relig. mist.*, p. 93.

I note in conclusion the three principal themes involved in the association of Nemesis with the Danubian Rider religion: 1. She avenged injustice and evil, a characteristic which brought her near to the Goddess; 2. She was in command of chthonic and magical powers which associated her also with strong tendencies of this religion, manifest especially in the final phase of its existence; and 3. She had become one of the preferred divinities of soldiers.

*Hecate triformis*, her hair dressed in a modius, figures only once, on an engraved gem (194 B); she is furnished with her usual attributes—two daggers, two whips, and two torches. She is positioned beside Nemesis, and at the two goddesses' feet a man lies prostrate —the victim of their vengeance. Apart from her association with Nemesis, *Dea triformis* was found also in association with Artemis-Diana-Selene,[102] divinities who had become confused with the Goddess of the Danubian plaques. The domains where this goddess was manifest belonged to the chthonic and magical worlds,[103] worlds closely linked. The gods of Hell were invoked by means of magic with the help of Hecate. It may then be that the man trampled underfoot by her and Nemesis (on the engraved gem mentioned above) contains an allusion to this world of the dead.[104] In the age of syncretism, Hecate became the *regina* of threefold attributes in

[102] Roscher in Roscher, *Lex* I, 2, col. 1885ff.; P. Paris, *DSDictAnt.* III, 1, p. 46; Heckenbach *PWRE* VII, 2, col. 2770 et Hopfner, *Pisciculi*, pp. 125-145. Her quality as a divinity of the stars and moon was at its height in the period of the Danubian Riders, cf. Heckenbach, *art. cit.*, col. 2778f. Several monuments from Dacia and Moesia, preserved at the Bucharest Museum (cf. Bordenache, *Sculture*, nos. 93-104) demonstrate her syncretist aspect. The Sun carved on her breast was a magical element (Petersen, *AEMÖ* IV (1880), p. 194, pl. I and Heckenbach, *loc. cit.*). As a chthonic divinity of fertility and the underworld, she was fused in Mithraic cult with *Diana triplex, triformis Libera* et *Cybele*; see: Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 140; Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*, p. 316ff.; Heckenbach, *art. cit.*, col. 2781 and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 14.

[103] Paris, *art. cit.* p. 49; Heckenbach, *art. cit.*, 2774. She collaborated also with Proserpine and Hermes ψυχοπομπός cf. Cumont, *op. cit.*, I, p. 140; Roscher, *art. cit.*, p. 1895, 1898 and Heckenbach, *ibid.*, p. 2773 et 2776.

[104] Principal deity of magic among the Romans: Massoneau, *La magie dans l'Antiquité*, p. 58; Cumont, *op. cit.*, I, p. 141 and Heckenbach, *art. cit.*, col.

the celestial, terrestrial, and chthonic worlds[105]—worlds well defined also in the Danubian Rider cult. The Danubian plaques likewise carry the symbols belonging to Hecate: the dog, the snake, the sword, the whip, etc. Nor can we consider as independent of her the caduceus of Mercury, the "conductor of souls" evoked with Hecate by magical procedures.[106] We must then conclude that in view of the chthonic and magical character of the Danubian Rider cult in the third century. Hecate must have played a part in the occult practices of this religion, but never in the front of the stage.

## E. Different Theories about the Danubian Gods

The first investigators of this cult were unanimous in recognizing the two Riders as the Cabiro-Dioscuri. The principal scene was analysed by Antonescu[107] with the help of the myth of the two Cabiri brothers who killed their third brother.[108] He even went so far as to try to identify the three Cabiri on the single-Rider plaques by making out an attendant of the god to be one of them—undoubtedly a serious error. According to Antonescu the third Cabirus, the one slain under the horse's hooves, was only subsequently deified, and this resulted in the production of the two-Rider plaques. For him, the two Riders were the protectors of Nature and of Agriculture, because we find on their reliefs a whole series of implements connected with work in the fields: shovels, picks, plough, baskets.[109] The presence of the goddess Victoria is also an indication of their quality of triumphal divinities.[110] One of the arguments used by

---

2778. In her quality as mistress of the underworld she wears the modius and magical triangle ("*Zauberdreieck*"), emblems which also decorate two engraved gems (195-196, c).

[105] Roscher, *art. cit.*, col. 1890; Cumont, *loc. cit.* and Heckenbach, *loc. cit.*

[106] Massoneau, *op. cit.*, p. 66f.

[107] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 33f.

[108] Fir. Maternus, *De err, prof. relig.*, XI and the variants of the legend in Clem. Alex., *Protrept.*, 20; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.*, V, 19 and *Pseudo Orph. hymn*, XXXIX.

[109] Antonescu, *op. cit.*, p. 233. All these objects are absent from the Danubian tablets, so that Antonescu's suppositions are pure fantasy.

[110] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Antonescu in favour of his hypotheses that the two Riders were brothers of the one prostrate under their horses' hooves was their supposed similarity of dress—an idea not borne out by the Danubian plaques, incidentally. As maritime divinities, protectors of trade, the Cabiri could hardly have interested the Dacians, who were not involved in occupations of that kind. On the other hand, Antonescu must be given the credit for having been the first to grasp the influence exerted on this cult by the Thracian Rider.[111]

The identity of the Danubian Rider with the Cabiri assimilated to the Dioscuri was likewise accepted by Schneider[112] and Nowotny.[113] Without adding anything to the hypotheses formulated by his predecessors, Hampel[114] attempted to introduce new arguments in favour of the identification of the Danubian Riders with the Cabiro-Dioscuri. For him the most important evidence was the presence of the two stars above the Riders' heads on certain monuments.[115] But he was sceptical of the possibility of applying the legend of the Cabiri to all the Danubian Rider reliefs,[116] as Antonescu and Nowotny had claimed to do, since we do not always find on them two Riders and a third person slain.[117] Misled by the artistic resemblances of those pieces representing only a single Rider with those dedicated to the Thracian Rider, he made the mistake of merging the two religions into a single cut. For that reason he declares that the Danubian plaques can only be explained by tracing them back through the Thracian Rider reliefs to the Greek funerary stelae of the Hellenistic and Classical periods.[118]

---

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 256. In his opinion this influence can actually be seen only on one plaque (174); on this Gerhard, *AZ*, 1859, p. 210 f., identified also the god Lunus.

[112] Schneider, *AEMÖ*, 1887, p. 14.

[113] Nowotny, *WMBH*, 1896, p. 199ff. who seeks to demonstrate that the fish deposited on the table before the Goddess is the *pompilus* known in Cabiric cult.

[114] *AÉrt*, 1903, p. 300; 1905, p. 123; 1912, p. 350ff. and *BpRég.*, 1904, p. 9ff.

[115] Hampel, *BpRég.*, 1904, p. 27 and *AÉrt.*, 1912, p. 340.

[116] Hampel, *AÉrt.*, 1912, p. 290; Hampel still identifies the fish with the *pompilus*, *ibid.*, p. 346.

[117] Hampel, *BpRég.*, 1904, p. 28.

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 30 and *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 344ff.

Ziehen[119] makes a clear distinction between the Thracian Rider cult and that of the Danubian Riders by drawing attention to the fact that the first nine bas-reliefs of the Hampel catalogue are wrongly attributed. He shows too that the Danubian Rider religion differed from one region to another. Their names are unknown to us and if there was an influence by the Cabiri or Dioscuri, this is not evident on the two-Rider plaques. He is opposed by Abramić[120] who adheres tenaciously to the identification of the Danubian Riders with the Cabiri assimilated to the Dioscuri.

Another scholar who recognizes the image of the Dioscuri on the Danubian monuments is Dölger;[121] he supports Pick's [122] view, attributing to them a chthonic nature from such symbols as the snake, the cock, the crater, and so on. According to Dölger, the Dioscuri are represented on the Danubian plaques according to the popular conception of them in the 1st to 2nd centuries A.D., when each one lived in turn one day in the underworld while his brother remained on earth to save men in danger, and they exchanged roles every evening. The fish placed under the feet of one of the Riders in some Pannonian lead reliefs was clear evidence that the mission of one of the Dioscuri was to save the lives of the shipwrecked.[123]

Accepting Ziehen's conclusions, Kazarow[124] showed that the two cults of the Thracian Rider and the Cabiri are quite different from that rendered to the Danubian Riders, with which there was no more than an exchange of certain influences. For the Bulgarian scholar the Danubian Riders represent a clear syncretism in a cult of oriental type having nothing in common with Thrace in its origins. On other points of controversy Kazarow supports the opinions of Rostovtseff and Tudor.

---

[119] Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, col. 12ff. This is also the opinion of Seure, *RÉA*, 1924, p. 324f., whose great credit it was to have proposed the province of Dacia as the region where the Danubian Rider cult took shape and from which it was diffused.

[120] Abramić, *ÖJh*, 1914, p. 100; *Serta Hoffilleriana*, p. 297ff. and *Vjesnik-Split*, 1952, p. 13. The Croat archaeologist emphasizes the affinities of the Danubian Riders with the Dioscuri on the basis of the Terracina bas-relief (176).

[121] Dölger, *ΙΧΘΥC* I, p. 146 and II, p. 433, wrongly states that the two Riders on the Danubian tablets are always young.

[122] B. Pick, *JDAI*, 1898, p. 149.

[123] A hypothesis accepted also by Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 122.

[124] Kazarow, *ARW*, 1912, p. 161 and 1939, p. 161ff.; *PWRE*, Suppl. III, col. 1148; *AnzÖAk*, 1940, p. 30. Cf. also: *AA*, 1938, p. 157; *AÉrt*, 1942, p. 249ff. and *Pisciculi*, p. 146ff.

Buday[125]—whose mistakes and confusions have already been demonstrated—completely merges the Thracian Rider with the single Danubian Rider and the Dioscuri with the two Riders. He bases his opinion above all on an engraved gem (193), today known only from a completely inaccurate drawing. On this he finds two Cabiri brothers, one still young, the other older, with a man kneeling between them. The two Cabiri brothers are likewise indicated, in his opinion, by the two stars reproduced near the horse's head.[126] As for the men trampled by the horses, Buday does not think they are enemies suffering a tragic fate,[127] but swimmers breasting the sea (173, 195, 196)—another allusion to the divinities of Samothrace and the dogma of the resurrection revealed through the mysteries.

Opposing the identification of the two Danubian Riders with the Aegean Cabiri, Rostovtseff[128] assigns an Iranian origin to them, and thinks they reached the banks of the Danube from southern Russia. The Russian scholar considers that a series of monuments found north of the Black Sea, in the Scythian regions, have certain links with the Danubian plaques.[129] Among these monuments the includes: 1. The rhyton of Karagodenać, with a scene where a Scythian rider holds communion with the Iranian Great God, while under their horses are seen men prostrate on the ground. Eight centuries later the same scene was reproduced on the Sassanid engraved gems. 2. A whole series of reproductions where the communion this time is administered by a goddess—the rhyton of Merdjany from the valley of the Kuban, that of Poroina (department of Mehedinţi, Rumania), etc.[130] According to Rostovtseff the doubling of the Rider must have taken place on the banks of the Danube, through a local initiative culminating in the birth of a triad.[131]

---

[125] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 146.

[126] Buday, *op. cit.*, 1928, p. 125ff. With his usual uncontrolled fantasy, Buday embarks on a series of mistaken interpretations in his description of an engraved gem (193), concerning the movements of personages, the appearance of a god protected by an attendant, etc.

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 122ff. Buday does not notice that the men fallen under the horses' hooves are struck by the Riders and torn by lions! He naively asserts that on the (mon. 47, a; 71, a; 155, a) the men prostrate on the earth are "sleeping sweetly" and awaiting the resurrection promised in the mysteries of the cult!

[128] See above, p. 29f. On the mon. 174 he also identifies the Hittite god Sozon, cf. *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 18.

[129] According to Rostovtseff it is mon. 45 which establishes this connection. Against: Giglioli, *ArchClass* III (1951), p. 204f.

For Chapouthier[132] while the Danubian Riders represented a cult distinct from that of the Dioscuri, the sculptural development of the Danubian plaques with two Riders was modelled on the Dioscuri reliefs of the 3rd century. Originating in Dacia, the cult of the Danubian Riders was significantly influenced by other cults with their own mysteries (Cabiro-Dioscuric, Mithraic, etc.) and preserved many points of obscurity regarding the nature of the gods worshipped.

As I have already shown above, for E. Will[133] the Danubian Riders were native Dacian deities. Their cult arose after Trajan's conquest, at first with a single Rider, who was later doubled under the influence of the Dioscuri. I find extremely valuable this scholar's remark, in reference to Thrace and Moesia: "There are no Rider-Gods, but only gods represented on horseback and, more precisely, gods of rider peoples."[134]

Our conclusion then is that there have been two great currents of opinion on the origin and nature of the Danubian Riders. The first scholars who concerned themselves with the study of this cult (Antonescu, Schneider, Nowotny, Abramić, Dölger, Buday, etc.) identified the Danubian Riders with the Cabiri and Dioscuri—a thesis which has been finally abandoned in our day. A second current has opted for a local origin of this religion, either from a nucleus transplanted from southern Russia (Rostovtseff, Kazarow) or else developed on the banks of the Lower Danube and of Dacian origin (Chapouthier, Wiesner, Tudor, Will, etc.). This last theory is the most widely held today and most specialists consider the soil of the Dacian province as the cradle of the sculpture of the Danubian plaques (Tudor, Chapouthier, Will, etc.).

---

[130] Rostovtseff, *op. cit.*, p. 20. All these monuments are described and illustrated by Rostovtseff, *Bull. Commis. arch. Russie*, 1913, p. 1f.

[131] Rostovtseff, *RÉA*, 1919, p. 479.

[132] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 286ff. and *RÉA*, 1939, p. 65ff. In the third century the Dioscuri too become *dii militares*, a fact which explains the association of the Castores with the military divinities, Jupiter Dolichenus among them, cf. Merlat, *Rép. JupDol.*, pp. 49, 129, 132, 302, etc.

[133] See above, p. 45ff. Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 104, observes that "le domaine des dieux cavaliers s'étend du Danube a l'Euphrate."

[134] Will, *op. cit.*, p. 105 and 116.

### 1. *What can be the Origin and Natures of the Danubian Goddess and Rider-Gods?*

A review of the iconography and symbols of the three Danubian divinities reveals their character as gods capable of assuring the safety and prosperity of their votaries as cosmic—celestial, chthonian—and eternal deities. This character is also peculiar to all the oriental gods with mysteries (Jupiter Dolichenus, Mithras, Cybele, etc.).

The central group, composed of the Goddess, the Riders, and the enemies prostrate under the horses' hooves, constitutes a unitary and classical picture for all the Danubian plaques. Can it be identified with the Cabiri or some other female deity associated with their cult? The reply to this question can only be negative if we examine the sculptural and religious elements of these monuments from the standpoint of the well-known myth of the divinities of Samothrace.

In the absence of any special qualities of portraiture, the Goddess can only be studied with reference to her attributes and religious symbols. A meticulous examination of this kind shows her to be a very complex deity. Of one of her hypostases there can be no doubt: as protectress of the Riders' mounts whom she feeds and welcomes with open arms. It cannot therefore be denied that she must have possessed some of the attributes of Epona, the Celtic goddess, as many scholars have noted. We observe also that she must have preserved this feature as long as the Danubian Rider cult lasted. But it does not follow that she can be completely identified with the Celtic goddess, to whom some of her symbols are completely unknown (the fish, for instance). On the other hand, on none of the Danubian plaques is she reproduced in the familiar posture of

Epona, that is, mounted on a horse and holding in her hands a patera, a cornucopia, or the circular vase overflowing with offerings.[135]

The worship of Epona could have spread in the Lower Danube regions from the time of the great Celtic invasions. Her presence is recorded on the Thracian Rider monuments[136] in the countries where horse-rearing was always very widespread. The discussions about the significance which the horse may have had on cultic and funerary monuments have in recent times not reached any but vague and contradictory conclusions.[137] In a re-examination of the problem Ferdinand Benoit[138] has emphasized the role of the horse as a solar and funerary symbol. Certain attributes indicated on the Danubian reliefs define the Riders as solar divinities, while others reveal their dealings with the underworld, and consequently their quality as conductors of souls. The religious significance of the horse, who helps the Riders in their fight against evil, is underlined also by the fact that he is directly fed from the Goddess's hands. Thus the presence of the horse as a symbol of immortality on the Danubian plaques would allow the votaries to create a number of beliefs and superstitions of an astral, chthonic, magical, and demonic character.[139]

---

[135] S. Reinach, *RA*, 1895, p. 163ff. and p. 309ff. Rarely we find her enthroned and flanked by the two Riders (Reinach, *op. cit.*, p. 314, no. 68). Reinach has also catalogued in his account of the series of monuments dedicated to the goddess Epona, the Danubian Rider relief found at Carnuntum (149), but he considers it dubious, while Lafaye, *DSDictAnt* II, 1, p. 735, sees in it a bizarre composition around the Celtic goddess. Albert, *DSDictAnt* II, p. 218, names the two Danubian Riders "Castor and Pollux", but for him the Goddess remains incomprehensible. In Dacia we do not meet with Epona represented among horses. South of the Danube mention can be made of the bas-reliefs from Plovdiv (Philippopolis) and Aptat, cf. Réné Maguen, *Epona. Déesse gauloise des chevaux, protectrice des Cavaliers* (*Inventaire des monuments* par Emile Thevenot), Bordeaux, 1953, p. 58, nos. 219-220, pl. 61 and 62. On the relief from Aptat Epona is feeding the horses in the manner of the Goddess of the Danubian tablets.

[136] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, mon. 339, fig. 224 and Benoit *Herois. équest.*, pp. 7 and 115.

[137] See the bibliography of the problems in Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 77, n. 2.

[138] Benoit, *op. cit.*, *passim*. Cf. again Cumont, *Lux perpetua*, Paris 1949, p. 286ff.

[139] Benoit, *op. cit.*, pp. 9ff., 87, 107ff. Benoit's view (*ibid.*, p. 32) that the

When the Roman armies set foot on the banks of the Danube, Epona found her way into their military pantheon, thanks especially to the cavalry squadrons.[140] She is found frequently as an object of worship by the cavalry army corps, in most cases in association with other warrior divinities.[141] As we know, the Danubian Rider cult was much favoured also in the Lower Danube camps, whence it follows that a good number of elements borrowed from the Epona cults must have been adopted there. It was just the elements in common to the religions of these two female deities which facilitated a *rapprochement* between them without leading to a complete fusion of the Danubian Goddess with the Celtic Epona. The absence of representations of Epona in Dacia and their rarity south of the Danube proves the impossibility of any iconographic contact between the two groups of reliefs.

As I have already shown above, when it comes to the interpretation of the Danubian plaques the specialist must concentrate his whole attention on the fundamental symbols of the principal divinities: the ram and the fish, which accompany them from the very first monuments. The bull, on the other hand, is not represented except very sporadically by comparison with the ram. On the monuments of Class A, for instance, we find it once carved in large size in an upper scene (29, a) and in a lower register of another piece (174, c) in the company of the ram, the cock, and the tripod with the fish. It is more frequent on the Class B plaques, in the *occultatio* scenes (in the lower register, therefore) (3, c; 32, b; 100, b; 182, c) in the company of other symbols, the ram, the lion, the tripod with fish, the crater, etc. (37, a; 42, a; 75, b; 88, c; 194, A, b). Once only

---

horse cult is characteristic of nomadic peoples, whereas that of the bull is specific to sedentary peoples, is not confirmed in the geographical area of diffusion of the Danubian Rider religion.

[140] *CIL* III, 788; 3420; 4776; 4777; 4784 = *ILS* 4835; 5176; 5192 = *ILS* 4859; 5312 = *ILS* 1362, a; 6332, a; 7758; 7904 = *ILS* 2417; 8671; 11909 = *ILS* 4830; 12679 = *ILS* 4837; Vulić, *ÖJh* VIII (1905), p. 12, no. 38. G. Seure, *RÉA*, 1912, p. 147, n. 3, states that in Thrace there existed a local divinity with similar attributes, a situation which would have facilitated her syncretism with the Celtic Epona.

[141] Domaszewski, *Rel. röm. Heeres*, p. 59ff.; Cumont *MMM*, I, p. 152 and Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 21.

the bull figures in the upper register of a plaque of this same class in the company of the lion, the eagle, and the cock (72, b).

In view of the Goddess's lunar aspect there is no doubt that the bull is one of her symbols. In the theology of Mazdaism, in fact, this animal as a symbol of the moon represents the force which makes plants germinate and grow. Its head placed between two snakes constitutes an astral symbol—the constellation of Taurus.[142] The animal was sacrificed to the Goddess. Its importance in the Danubian Rider rituals must have increased from the moment when the influence of the Mithras cult began to figure so largely. This importance is reflected by the *crio-taurobolium*. All the same, the bull, despite its great role in the Mithras cult, was never to attain the very first rank among the artistic and iconographic or religious elements of the Danubian Rider religion. In any case, its presence attests the religious links of the Goddess with other female deities of the same kind: Luna, Artemis, Cybele, Anaitis Tauropolos, etc., in whose cults the bull as a sacred animal filled an extremely important role.[143]

For a good number of Syrian divinities, and notably for Atargatis, the fish above all was the sacred animal. Moreover it frequently appears in a number of pre-Roman cults spread over Dacia, as also over the whole northern Black Sea region as far as the Armenian plateau, where it also represented the harmful forces of Nature.[144] But this last aspect never appears on the Danubian plaques. There the fish is always put in the place of honour. If it sometimes appears near the horses' legs (cf. above, p. 121), that does not mean that it is in any way a demon conquered by the Riders. Probably it represents a companion who has followed them by sea, as the lion, the snake, and the dog have done overland. This scene then shows some analogies with those where Mithras or the Thracian Rider are shown on horseback with the snake close to their mount's head.[145] What the fish was for the Goddess, the ram was for the Riders.

---

[142] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 261. The bull in the iconography of the Thracian Rider, in Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, nos. 274-281, 357 etc.

[143] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 33ff.; *Relig. orient.*, p. 62; *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 190; Graillot, *Cybèle*, p. 192ff.

[144] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 20ff.

But in any case we cannot accept Rostovtseff's hypothesis that southern Russia was the originating homeland of the Goddess with the fish, since half a millennium separates the northern Black Sea monuments from the Danubian plaques. In view of the number of centuries which elapsed between the two groups of monuments and their distance from one another in space it would be difficult to find any direct link between them by reasoning from the movements of migrating peoples.[146] Their iconographic resemblances can be nothing but the effect of chance, their source the common fund of beliefs developed separately in different populations.[147]

Certain scholars have countered my theory that Dacia was the cradle of the iconography of the Danubian Riders with a preference for Lower Moesia, dating the moment of its appearance to that when it was being transformed into a Roman province. Their main argument is that the monuments of the Thracian Rider are more frequent in Lower Moesia and that it was these which inspired the first Danubian plaques. According to them, too, the syncretism peculiar to the Danubian plaques of Class A, with a single Rider, must have been specific to Lower Moesia. They add that several monuments carved in stone were imported into Dacia from south of the Danube, that the religion of the Dacians was aniconic, and so on.[148] But as I have already had occasion to say, there are also quite a number of scholars who recognize, from analysis of the archaeological material, that the sculptures of the earliest Danubian plaques took shape north of the river.[149]

---

[145] The Thracian Rider too is accompanied by the snake for hunting: Dobruski, *Izvestia Muzei*, I, (1907), p. 49, fig. 43; p. 111, fig. 90; p. 72, no. 70; Seure, *RÉG*, 1913, p. 228ff., fig. 2, b; p. 229, fig. 3, c and p. 242ff.; Kazarow, *Denkmäler* II, pl. XXXI, 144, 185, 252; *PWRE*, Suppl. III, col. 1138. Mithras the hunter helped by the snake, see: Cumont, *MMM* II, p. 424; Fr. Behn, *Das Mithrasheiligtum zu Dieburg*, Berlin 1928, p. 8ff., Dussaud, *Syria* V (1924), p. 120ff. and pl. XXXI, 4; Rostovtseff, *MdI*, 1934, p. 190ff.; Vermaseren, *CIMRM* 11, fig. 274 and Campbell, *MithrIcon.*, pl. IV and XIX. In Asia Minor, on coins, metal objects, and gems, the snake is found as a companion of the Rider; cf. W. Dörpfeld, *Troia und Ilion*, Athena 1902, II, p. 443; E. Babelon, *Rev, numism.*, 1898, p. 47ff. nos. 3640, 3732, 3752 etc.; F. Imhoof-Blümer, *Kleinas. Münzen* II, p. 366, no. 4 and A. Furtwängler, *Die ant. Gemmen*, Berlin 1900, pl. XIX, 56, XX, 36 etc.

[146] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 141 observes that "Rostovtseff's fine theory lacks a foundation stone."

[147] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 288.

### 2. *The Problem of the Razgrad Plaques*

An important part has been played in these controversies by the metal plaques found at Abrittus (Razgrad) in Bulgaria and published for the first time by Kazarow.[150] Of exceptional interest among them are three examples showing several artistic and religious elements in common with the Danubian plaques.

The first of these three[151] shows a bearded Rider, dressed in a tunic with the chlamys down his back. In his right hand he raises a rhyton. Before him, a man is striking with an axe the head of a bull tied by a rope to a flaming altar. In the upper angles of the plaque are the busts of Luna (left) and Sol (right). Between the legs of his mount appears a ram. Behind the Rider is a raven in full flight, in front of him stands a cock (pl. XIII).

The second Razgrad plaque[152] shows a religious scene framed in columns supporting a graceful pediment. An almost identical decoration is found on a bronze Danubian plaque with a single Rider, brought to light in southern Dacia (45). Once again we have a bearded Rider, dressed in a tunic, his chlamys flying in the wind, and wearing a Phrygian cap. His mount faces right. He is holding a rhyton in his hand and has a quiver at his back. A snake accompanies him beside the horse's legs. The goddess who welcomes him offers him another rhyton. In front of the horse we see the same scene of the man slaying with a double axe a bull, similarly tied. As attendant behind the horse a woman is seated playing the lyre (pl. XIVa).

---

[148] Kazarow, *AnzÖAk*, 1940, p. 29; Daicoviciu, *AISC* IV (1941-1943) p. 295, and *La Transylvanie*, p. 148, n. 1; Frova, *Studi Mistrorigo*, p. 13 and Mladenova, *Studia Dečev*, p. 554. Cf. also Cumont, *RA* II, 67; Russu *AISC* V (1944-1948), p. 83; N. Gostar *Ann. de l'Inst. d'hist. et Arch. Jasi* II, 1965, p. 252.

[149] Chapouthier, *RÉA*, 1939, p. 66; Kruglicova, *Vestnik Drevni Istorii*, 3 (1947), p. 148ff.; Kolosovskaia, *Vest. Drev. Ist.*, 1 (1957) p. 93ff. and Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 328ff.

[150] Kazarow, *AA*, 1922, col. 184f.; Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 227ff. The controversies about chronology in Rostovtseff, *A History of the Ancient World*, Oxford, 1927, II, p. 339; Kazarow, *PWRE* VI, A, col. 532; *AnzÖAk*, 1940, p. 28ff., and T. Ivanov, *Abrittus*, Sofia, 1965, p. 45ff., who sees Sabazius and Anahita on the Razgrad plaques.

[151] Kazarow, *AA*, 1922, col. 186, no. 1, fig. 1. Similar but simpler is the following plaque, *Ibid.*, p. 187ff., no. 2, fig. 2. Wüst, *PWRE* IV, col. 2146, sees in the Razgrad tablets Mithras syncretized with the Thracian Rider. But it must be observed that symbols such as the fish and the ram are lacking from the cults of these two gods.

[152] Kazarow, *AA*, 1922, p. 187ff., no. 2, fig. 2.

Finally the third Razgrad plaque[153] with a bearing on our problem is one of a series of six almost identical in style and content (framed in corded lines). This time we have the bust of a goddess, her hair falling over her shoulders and dressed in a triple modius, and wearing a necklace. She is raising her arms in front of her, palms upward. Before her is the fish (pl. XIV, b).

The first publisher of these curious Razgrad metal reliefs at once compared them to the Danubian Rider plaques. His reasons were the three symbols (the fish, the ram, and the bull), the presence of which decided him to deny any direct connection between these reliefs and the Thracian Rider monuments. At the same time, Kazarow found on the Razgrad plaques an influence from Asia Minor, of Syrian, Phrygian, and Mithraic origin, introduced by the Sabazius cult.[154] The relief which shows the goddess alone, her hair dressed in the modius and with the fish, persuaded Kazarow to see some kinship with Anaitis, thus represented on other monuments.[155] Here she is the subject of syncretism with the Semitic Great Goddess, who was herself syncretized with Anaitis.[156] Kazarow also detected an Iranian dualism, a hypothesis which had already been formulated earlier by Rostovtseff in respect of some Scytho-Sarmatic representations from the north of the Black Sea.[157] In conclusion Kazarow sought to demonstrate a close kinship between the Razgrad pieces and those brought to light in southern Russia.[158]

---

[153] Kazarow, *AA*, 1922, p. 194, no. 9, fig. 9. On the five other similar tablets from Razgrad, the goddess is marked by a single modius (nos. 8, 10-12, 17), by the Phrygian flute (no. 11), by the cymbal (no. 8), and by the lunar crescent accompanied by the solar disc (no. 17).

[154] Kazarow, *AA*, 1922, p. 198ff.

[155] Cumont, *PWRE* I, I, col. 2031.

[156] Kazarow, *AA*, 1922, p. 200.

The present author shares Kazarow's opinion regarding the links between the Razgrad plaques and those of the Danubian Riders. On the other hand, I cannot accept their supposed kinship with the pieces from southern Russia.[159] It is true that the common elements between the Razgrad plaques and certain Danubian plaques are striking. Symbols such as the ram, the fish, the snake, the cock, the bull, the raven, the sun and moon deities, the lyre are as frequent in one group as in the other. The scene of the man killing with a double axe the bull (or the ram) has analogies with the frequent sacrifice of the bull and the ram on the altar, later, in the practice of the *crio-taurobolium*. Further, the female deity of the Razgrad plaques has as her symbol a fish lying in front of her, so that she resembles at all points the Great Goddess of the Danubian plaques. Her triple modius is an allusion to her triple hypostasis as a celestial, terrestrial, and underworld goddess, the very feature characteristic of the Danubian Great Goddess, allying her with *Hecate triformis*, who is also present in the Danubian Rider cult (194, B).

But the closest stylistic links are those between the first two Razgrad plaques and a Danubian plaque brought to light in Lower Dacia which can be counted among the earliest of the whole series. Its antiquity is further attested by the absence of the enemy trampled by the horse's hooves (45). A mere comparison shows the identity of the symbols (the snake, the ram), the costume, and the communion between god and goddess. These resemblances have prompted me to identify in the Razgrad plaques the oldest and simplest sculptural expression of the Danubian single-Rider cult, earlier than its classical iconography assigned in general to Class A, which must have originated only north of the Danube, not till after the conquest of Dacia and its transformation into a Roman province.[160] The Razgrad reliefs had not yet incorporated the principal myth in its completed form, as is shown by the absence of the man trampled under the horse's feet. They only reproduce (like the Lower Dacia plaque—45) the communion of the two divinities escorted by their principal symbols.

---

[157] Rostovtseff, *Bull.Commiss. arch. Russie*, 1913, p. 58; *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 20; *Skythien und der Bosporus*, Berlin, 1931, I, p. 542 and *Storia economica e sociale dell'Impero romano*, Firenze, 1933, p. 534, n. 36. A partisan of "Scythianism" regarding the origin of the Danubian Riders, A. Alföldi (*Daci e Romani in Transilvania*, Budapest, 1940, p. 33ff. and *FoliaArch* III-IV (1941), p. 176) states that Rider deities did not exist in the pantheon of the Dacians, because this people had no troops mounted on horseback. But this statement is contradicted by several scenes on Trajan's column where we often see the Dacian horsemen fighting against the Romans.

[158] Kazarow, *AA*, 1922, p. 196ff.

[159] Tudor *ED* VII, p. 226ff. et *Dacia* N.S.V. (1961), p. 328ff.

As for the dating of the Razgrad plaques, their highly polished technical execution and artistic quality point to the end of the first century and the beginning of the second.

The cultic analogies, together with the sculptural resemblances I have noted between the Razgrad plaques and the older pieces of the Danubian Riders, were fully accepted by Kazarow, who for that reason refrained from including them in the *Corpus* of reliefs of the Thracian Rider published by him in 1938.[161] But in regard to the origins of this divinity the Bulgarian scholar remained faithful to Rostovtseff's hypotheses, which derived this cult from the Iranian world to the north and east of the Black Sea. He believes the Sarmatians carried this religion into the future territories of Lower Moesia, where in his view the sculptural expression of the cult originated—that is, the Class A plaques. In order to reconstruct the missing links in the chain which in the course of time, according to him, connected the reliefs of southern Russia with the Razgrad plaques, Kazarow appealed to the two groups of silver plaques brought to light at Mikhailovo, Kufaldzilar, Opaka, and Galice.[162]

However, these four chain-links proposed by Kazarow to establish the connection between the north of the Black Sea and the east of Lower Moesia are very far from conclusive. The repertoire of these silver pieces is very sparse, their general characters conforming to those of too many different religions to allow such a conclusion.[163]

---

[160] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 229.

[161] Kazarow, *AnzÖAk*, 1940, p. 28ff. and *Denkmäler, Textb.*, p. 5f.

[162] Kazarow, *AnzÖAk*, 1925, p. 41; 1927, p. 336; 1938, p. 119; 1940, p. 28ff.; *PWRE* VI, A, col. 486 et 532 (where he sees Sabazius); *BIAB* VII (1919/20), p. 142 and *CAH* III, pl. 76.

[163] Tudor, *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961), p. 328.

Will's interpretation of the Razgrad plaques is quite different.[164] He thinks their repertoire has many aspects of the iconography peculiar to the Thracian Rider and some other deities. He treats separately the different symbols figuring on the Razgrad pieces, noting their presence on other cultic reliefs. It goes without saying that, when such attributes are taken one by one or in groups of two or three, analogies are bound to be detected with the sculptural repertoire of other deities, especially among the non-equestrian ones. But this cannot be the most appropriate method of solving the problem of the religious relationship of the Razgrad plaques. These show an equestrian god and a goddess, separately or together, accompanied by a whole compact set of characteristic symbols, the presence and ordering of which are specific only to the Danubian Class A plaques (with a single Rider) and to no others. In the full flood of syncretism there is nowhere to be found, on the monuments dedicated to other deities, a sequence and order of symbols identical with those found on the Razgrad plaques and on those with a single

---

[164] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 46: "C'est au groupe du Cavalier unique qu'il convient de rattacher les tablettes découvertes a Razgrad en Bulgarie qui représent un Cavalier. L'identification de cette figure n'est pas assurée, bien qu'il nous semble qu'elle doive s'interpréter comme une des formes du Héros thrace". I find very curious Will's statement (*Rel. cult.*, p. 91) that: "Il n'y a pas cependant aucune difference fondamentale entre cette figure divine [Razgrad] et les autres cavaliers de la série thrace." I do not agree with this writer's tendency to minimize the importance of the symbols on the Razgrad plaques, where he considers the ram, the bull, the cock, the fish, and the snake as mere supplementary elements represented "here and there". To understand the Razgrad tablets thoroughly, we must first of all analyse their symbols, while the caps and the clothing of the gods appealed to by Will are for me items of iconography common to several religions. It is equally strange that Will has not noticed the striking resemblance between the Razgrad tablets and one plaque representing the single Danubian Rider (45). Will moreover remains oblivious of Kazarow's important contribution (cf. *AnzÖAk*, 1940, p. 28ff.) concerning the problem of the Razgrad tablets. He made special use of the dates supplied by Chapouthier (*Dioscures*, p. 292). I must also reject Will's statement (*op. cit.*, p. 90) attributing to me the aim of discovering in the Razgrad tablets the artistic prototype of the Danubian single-Rider bas-reliefs. In fact what I found was "la più semplice forma del nostro culto" (Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 229), quite different from the classical type of the Danubian tablets with a single Rider (Class A), because the Razgrad pieces lack the man fallen under the horses' hooves (cf. also *Dacia*, N.S. VI (1961), p. 329, n. 54).

Danubian Rider. There is not the least possibility of identifying them with the Thracian Rider reliefs. It was this very fact which prompted Kazarow, the leading specialist of the Thracian Rider cult, to exclude the Razgrad plaques from the *Corpus* of monuments dedicated to this south Danube deity. Quite the contrary, he recognized in the Razgrad reliefs a first attempt at representing the God and Goddess of the Danubian Rider religion (Class A, with one Rider), the characteristic feature of which at a later stage (when it was completely established) was to be the presence of the man trampled by the horses' hooves. To declare illusory the stylistic and iconographic resemblances between the Razgrad and the Danubian Rider reliefs, for the sole reason that the heraldic type of confronted Riders and prostrate enemy was absent from the former,[165] can only prove an absolutely superficial acquaintance with the monuments.

For my part, the inescapable conclusion is that certain of the Razgrad plaques are directly related to the Danubian single-Rider plaques. The two groups of reliefs can be dated[166] from their stylistic elements and the simplicity of their repertoire at latest to the beginning of the 2nd century. It must not be forgotten that in the age of syncretism the provincial workshops engaged in the production of such cult objects borrowed different symbols from those provided by other religions, with an iconography already fixed.[167] But neither can these Razgrad plaques be the prototype or the unique model of the Danubian plaques. They are only one variant, isolated and not corresponding to all the canons of the prototype, of the Danubian Rider reliefs in their initial form (Class A). Their manufacture in Lower Moesia was attempted almost at the same time as the classic iconography of the Danubian plaques (definitive in its general features) was being established in Lower Dacia.

[165] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 92.

[166] The chronology of the Razgrad plaques is highly controversial: see Kazarow, *AnzÖAk*, 1922, p. 187; Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 227ff. and Will, *op. cit.*, p. 92, n. 2. Only Mladenova, *Studia Dečev*, p. 555, has dated these plaques *en bloc* to the third century A.D., on the basis of their chthonic and solar attributes, which she says are specific to this period. But in fact all the attributes cited by Mladenova are also found in the repertoire of the Danubian tablets with a single Rider, which certainly belong to the second century A.D.

[167] Tudor, *Dacia* V (1961), p. 329.

Whereas for the Thracian Rider reliefs the master stonecarvers may have been inspired by Greek models, no such idea can be entertained (as Will would do)[168] in regard to the single Danubian Rider. For him in fact what we have, in place of a direct Greek influence, was a borrowing from the Thracian Rider's repertoire combined with one from the Mithraic reliefs.

### 3. *In what Region did the Iconography of the Earliest Danubian Plaques, those with a Single Rider, first take shape?*

It must first be laid down that for the solution of this problem only the 31 single-Rider bas-reliefs can be used in evidence. In other words we shall be dealing with monuments unanimously accepted as the earliest. As already explained, more than half the total (17) of these monuments come from Dacia (1, 2, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 29, 33, 40, 45, 46, 200-203) and seven others from the two Moesias (55, 58, 59, 64, 77, 79, 90). Of these last, those found in Upper Moesia do not come into consideration (55, 58, 59, 64) since, as their repertoire indicates, they do not form part of the set, not being pieces as old as the rest. They can rather be considered as an echo of pieces completed in Dacia, with which they have many stylistic and religious resemblances. It remains then to discuss the 17 other pieces found in Dacia and the three from Lower Moesia (77, 79, 90), in order to establish which are the earliest examples.

To determine their antiquity overwhelming importance must be attached to their principal scene, which is found in absolutely all the Danubian Rider monuments of the two first classes (A-B). It tells the myth of the Goddess and the Danubian Rider-Gods, which in its details is still unknown to us. At the beginning undoubtedly this myth must have been fairly simple, as the single-Rider plaques show. It must have been subsequently enriched, becoming also more complex from the moment when the cult provided for itself a sculptural expression and entered into contact with other religions, at the same time doubling its Riders. In view of its occult character—as the Danubian plaques show—this myth must necessarily have had some regional variants. I have sufficiently emphasized from the beginning the fact that the emergence of the sculptural expression of the Danubian Rider cult took place far from the influence of the cults of the Cabiri or Dioscuri. Their principal scene in fact hardly corresponds at all to the pattern followed by the Danubian plaques.

---

[168] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 92.

Since we have to do with one Rider-God and one Goddess, it is quite natural to study in comparison certain older monuments of this region which might have inspired the creators of the first Danubian plaques (with a single Rider). This leads us—as all the students of this cult have observed—to the iconographic storehouse of the Thracian Rider. At the same time, it would be a mistake to include the first Danubian plaques, with a single Rider, in the series of monuments of the Thracian Rider. The influence of the iconography of the Thracian Rider are rather of an artistic than a religious order. They are details of costume, of weaponry, of movement, of the tree with the snake, etc. which derive from the sculpture of the Thracian Rider.

The Thracian Rider, god or hero,—whose origin has been looked for in Anatolia as well as in other regions of the Mediterranean and Black Sea basin by following the traces of certain common cult elements[169]—was enthusiastically worshipped in Thrace (along the valley of the river Maritza, in the Rhodopian massifs, etc.), to a lesser extent in Lower Moesia, and rather sporadically in Upper Moesia.[170] With the Roman conquest his cult also entered Dacia, the recently created province, the territory of which has hitherto yielded about forty reliefs of the Thracian Rider.[171] His cult in the Balkans is earlier than his iconography, whence it follows that he at first passed through an aniconic phase.[172] He did not take on sculptural form until the moment when he was knocking at the doors of the Greek colonies of the Western Black Sea coast, there to penetrate into the interior, and to spread intensively during the 2nd to 4th centuries A.D.[173]

---

[169] Ch. Picard, *RHR* CL (1956), p. 17 and 21.

[170] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 3ff. and *Wiss. Zeitschrift K. Marx-Univ.-Leipzig* III, 2/3 (1953-1954) p. 135 (Gesellsch. u. Sprachwiss.). For Upper Moesia, cf. Aleksandra Cermanović-Kuzmanović, *Starinar*, N.S. XIII-XIV (1962/3), p. 113ff. et *Archaeologia Jugoslavica* IV (1963), p. 31ff.

[171] The repertoire of the Dacian monuments of the Thracian Rider has been edited by I. I. Russu, *ActaMN* IV (1967), p. 94ff. Cf. also Tudor, *Serta Kazaroviana*, Sofia, 1950, p. 161ff. and *OR*³, p. 378 (Pieces not yet published, from Romula, Sucidava, and Slăveni).

[172] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 56.

At the time of Roman domination the Thracian Rider cult became much more complex and by the process of syncretism was transformed into a multiple cult representing the divinity of Nature, life, the chase, the underworld, and developing also eschatological attributes. All these aspects are revealed by the study of his historical and iconographic evolution, in such masterly fashion displayed by Kazarow. In view of the wide diffusion among the Thracians of the idea of Rider-Gods, it was only natural that the cult of the Thracian Rider-Hero, so extremely popular in the rural areas, should have contributed to the multiplication of equestrian divinities—Dionysus, Apollo, Asclepius, Silvanus, and so on.[174]

At the time of its passage from the aniconic to the sculptural phase, the cult of the single Danubian Rider came into contact with certain iconographic representations of the Thracian Rider, both in Lower Moesia and in Lower Dacia. Given the equestrian nature of the Danubian god, the artisans specialized in metal-casting or stone-carving found the Thracian Rider reliefs the most appropriate model for the sculptural reproduction of the myth in the principal scene of the Danubian monuments. It was they who introduced into the earliest Danubian plaques certain iconographic details which had nothing to do with the story of the myth. In course of time these superfluous details disappeared in proportion as the scene of Rider-Gods and Goddess assumed its definitive sculptural form as we see it on the Class B plaques. Among these superfluous elements due to disappear in time we observe the tree with a snake coiled around its trunk,[175] the attendant (*hoplophoros*) hanging with one hand from the horse's tail[176] and the lion as protagonist in the fight under the horse's belly.[177] We note that where the contact between these two distinct groups of monuments was at its most lively the Danubian Riders have a more juvenile aspect, borrowed from the representations of the Thracian Rider.

---

[173] Kazarow, *Wiss. Zeitschr. K. Marx-Univ.*, 1953/1954, p. 135 and *Denkmäler*, p. 1.

[174] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 12 and *Wiss. Zeitschr. K. Marx-Univ.*, *loc. cit.* Consult also Picard, *art. cit.*, p. 16ff. In Pannonia bas-reliefs dedicated to the Thracian Rider have been found only at Siscia and Intercisa, and these are imported pieces (see Mócsy, *PWRE*, Suppl. IX, col. 740).

[175] Mon. 1, b; 41, d; 90; 200, b. A frequent element on the Thracian Rider reliefs, cf. Kazarow, *PWRE*, Suppl. III, col. 1138f. and *Denkmäler*, p. 5.

Credit is due also to Kazarow for having been the first to detect a reverse influence, by the repertoire of the Danubian plaques on the iconography of the Thracian Rider. But an important point must be made here. Despite their numerous links, both artistic and religious, with different gods, the Danubian Riders never appear on the same monument with the divinities concerned, as is the case with the Thracian Rider. The mutual borrowings appear above all in the domain of symbols, introduced particularly through the production workshops,[178] and also by the organization of the secret cult. The presence on a marble relief of the Thracian Rider uncovered at Todoričene (Bulgaria) of the busts of the sun and moon deities is to be explained according to Kazarow by borrowing from the Danubian plaques.[179] This reverse influence is likewise attested on the Thracian Rider reliefs in two cases where we find the enemy trampled by the horses' feet,[180] the characteristic feature of the Danubian Rider cult.

The snake coiled round a tree also penetrated Mithraic art, cf. Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 194, and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 364. For the meaning of this theme see E. Pfuhl, *JDAI* XX (1905), p. 91; Seure, *Rev. de phil.* LIV, p. 138, and *RA*, 1925, II, p. 17.

[176] Mon. 29, c; 34, c; 77, ?; 107, b; 183, b. The interpretation is given by: Perdrizet, *RA*, 1904, p. 22ff.; Seure, *RÉA*, 1912, p. 160ff.; Kazarow, *Germania*, 1935, p. 314ff. and *Denkmäler*, p. 6.

[177] Mon. 18, b; 27, a; 49; 59, a; 64, a; 77; 79; 80, a; 85, a; 87; 104, a; 118, a; 122, a; 153, b; 154, a; 181, b; 184, b; 218, b. Artistic theme of oriental origin, see: Kazarow, *BSAB*, 1913, p. 340; *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Thraker*, Sarajevo, 1916, p. 51; *Germania*, 1935, p. 315, and *Denkmäler*, p. 6; Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 7; *MdI* 49 (1934), p. 190ff. and *Yale Class. Stud.* V, p. 280. He often accompanies Mithras the Hunter, cf. Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 196ff.

[178] T. Nagy, *BpRég* XVI (1950), p. 98ff., presumes that the group lion-vase-snake penetrated the repertoire of the Danubian tablets by the same route; cf. also *ORL* XXXIII, 5, B, no. 53, p. 93, fig. 9.

[179] Kazarow, *Germania*, 19 (1935), p. 234; *Denkmäler*, p. 11; *AnzÖAk* XII-XV (1940), p. 109 and *Vjésnik Dalmatihsku* LVI-LIX (1954-1957), I, p. 45 (*Antidoron Michaeli Abramič*).

[180] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 10, nos. 184 and 193; cf. idem *Germania* 1935, p. 315 and *RA*, 1937, p. 39 and 41.

Nor can a Mithraic influence be denied, of an artistic character above all, on the Class A Danubian plaques (with one Rider). The postures of two attendants, copying the attitudes of Cautes and Cautopates, on a bronze plaque from Lower Dacia (46) have also been emphasized. Undoubtedly also the appearance on the first Danubian Rider monuments of Sol and Luna (1, b; 9, a; 10, a; 15, a; 16, a; 29, b; 59, a; 64, a; 79; 106, a; 107, a; 108, a; 110, a; 174, a; 183, a; 200, a; 202, A, a; 203, a) was due to influence by the Iranian reliefs.

Thus the sculptural composition of the Danubian plaques with a single Rider (Class A) had for its artistic model first of all the bas-reliefs of the Thracian Rider and in second place the Mithraic reliefs. They were produced on both sides of the Lower Danube, that is both in Lower Dacia and in Lower Moesia, since the majority of these monuments come from these two Roman provinces. It is a mistake to consider the earliest Danubian monuments with a single Rider as variants of the Thracian Rider reliefs, as certain investigators have done. The Thracian Rider religion hardly ever leads to the practice of mysteries. The Thracian Rider is on the whole a divinity of hunting and rural pursuits. He is a *hero* about whom much has been written without achieving a clarification of all his aspects.[181] Rarely he is seen wearing a Phrygian cap[182] and usually he is represented as a young beardless man.[183] His cult was generalized in a rural environment, where the principal occupations were horse and animal rearing, agriculture, or the chase. By contrast, the Danubian Rider religion was practised in other circles, subject to more exalted influence from the oriental cults. Its votaries belonged to a higher social class, such as was that of the soldiers.

---

[181] The extremely abundant literature cited by Kazarow, *PWRE* VI, A, col. 475f.; Suppl. III, col. 1148f.; *Denkmäler*, p. 1ff.; Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1926, p. 1ff.; Seure, *RPHLHA* XLIII (1928), p. 106ff. See also the note 25 above. Buday, *op. cit.*, p. 69 (and Vulić, *Spomenik* CXIV, 87) saw in the Thracian Rider not a god but a kind of deified worshipper, an idea refuted by Hekler, *AÉrt*, 1923-1926, p. 260, and Seure, *op. cit.*, p. 230. Seure, *ibid.*, p. 160ff., thought the image of the Thracian Rider represented the legendary Thracian king Rhessos.

[182] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 9.

[183] A good description in Seure, *RPHLHA*, 1928, p. 128.

Proceeding to a comparison of the groups of single-Rider monuments found in Dacia, (1, 2, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 29, 33, 40, 45, 46, 200-203) and Moesia (55, 58, 59, 64, 77, 79, 90) in respect both of their relative antiquity and the evolution of registers, we find the balance tilted in favour of the north Danube province. The conclusion forced upon us then is that the Danubian cult of the single Rider, as represented in its classical form, originated artistically speaking north of the Danube, in particular on the territory of Lower Dacia, where the oldest monuments of Class A have been brought to light (33, 40, 45, 46). The reliefs from Upper Dacia, richer and more evolved, can be considered as illustrating the second phase of the sculptural representation of the single Danubian Rider (1, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 29, 183, 200-203).

With almost a sole exception, the relief found at Viminacium (55), that is at the frontier with Dacia, the single-Rider Danubian monuments found in Moesia are still very poor in development of registers and repertoire (symbols, emblems, secondary divinities, cultic scenes, etc.). Thus we can affirm, today as in the past,[184] that the earliest sculptural representations of the single Danubian Rider originated in Dacian territory in the first half of the 2nd century A.D. There they had a rapid development both in respect of the registers and the richness of their figurative repertoire, while the Moesian monuments remained almost the same, as if fixed.

A very important fact must be emphasized regarding the Danubian Rider religion. As the map (fig. 1) shows, all the single-Rider monuments, that is to say the oldest (Class A), have been brought to light solely in the geographical regions designated by ancient historians and also by ancient toponymy and archaeological discovery[185] as inhabited by the Dacians. Moreover, the distribution map (fig. 2) of the two-Rider reliefs shows that these reliefs too, in their greater number come from the same regions, inhabited by Geto-Dacian populations. This observation, corroborated by other elements of a religious order, leads us to the only possible and natural conclusion that the Danubian Rider cult was directly related in its origins with the Geto-Dacian peoples living both north and south of the Danube. The religion of these deities took on sculptural form and began to spread in the area where the Geto-Dacians lived in a compact mass, in other words north of the Danube. The conquest of Dacia and its transformation into a province of the Empire enabled the myth of the Danubian Riders, till then aniconic, to undergo a sculptural transposition according to the *interpretatio romana*. This distribution of the Geto-Dacians on the two banks of the Danube, and the fact that they lived on in Roman Dacia, which was once disputed by certain historians,[186] has received more exact confirmation from recent archaeological excavations in Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. It is thus logical to acknowledge the existence of this myth among all the Geto-Dacian tribes. It found its first iconographic expression in the Danubian plaques from Dacia, whence its classical artistic prototype subsequently spread to Moesia and Dalmatia, later to reach Pannonia. The Danubian plaques found in Dalmatia, Italy, Gaul, and Britain had no doubt reached these countries by the hands of recruits or other Dacian elements from the shores of the Danube.

---

[184] Tudor, *ED* VIII, p. 100, and *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961), p. 325ff. Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 92, also purposes "la genèse de la série des Cavaliers danubiens, dans la Dacie romaine".

[185] An account of the literature of ancient and modern sources on the distribution of the Geto-Dacian tribes south and north of the Danube would be too long. The principal literary, archaeological, toponymic, and linguistic documents relative to the presence of the Dacians in this region are to be found in Pârvan, *Getica*, *passim*, with the map (Annex II) and Vladimir Gheorghiev, *Bălgarsca etimologiia i onomastica*, Sofia, 1960, p. 147ff. with a map (Annex No. 1); *Studii classice* II (1960), p. 39. See recently I. I. Russu, *Die Sprache der Thraco-Daker*, București, 1962, *passim*, and the map annexed.

The gods of the Danubian plaques are Riders, in keeping also with a fashion prevailing in the respective countries. Under the influence of this fashion other divinities whose nature did not in the least call for equestrian representation were reproduced on horseback.[187] Moreover the Thracian Rider, owing to his multiple links with other local divinities,[188] and also to his wide diffusion (as far as Asia Minor), exerted a new influence in this direction.[189] In Thrace, as in Anatolia, the horse played a great part in daily life. The great landed proprietors of the flocks moved around on horseback, often taking themselves for the veritable representatives of the gods on earth, so that the common people imagined that to be the method of transport preferred by the gods.[190] The horse and horseman are figured on the oldest coins struck by the peoples living north and south of the Danube[191] and the Getae were praised by ancient authors for their skill as horse-rearers.[192]

---

[186] Alföldi, *Daci e Romani*, p. 33ff. and *Zu den Schicksalen Siebenbürgens*, p. 59.

[187] *Expl. gr.*: Dionysus on horseback on a relief discovered in Thrace, cf. Perdrizet, *RA*, 1904, p. 20ff., pl. I; Apollo on horseback, cf. Dobruski *BCH* XXI (1897), p. 123; the *Hero* rider and hunter, cf. Vulpe, *Istros* I, 1, p. 148ff.: Mithras on horseback in the manner of the Thracian Rider; cf. B. Filow, *BSAB* II (1916), p. 92ff.

But what was more, the Danubian provinces of the Empire made of the horseman and his mount the symbols of the underworld deities and an allegory of death, which explains their frequent presence on funerary stelae.[193] At about the same period, the two riders of Asia minor preserved a solar and lunar character.[194]

---

[188] Represented in the same fashion are: the Dioscuri, Apollo, the Nymphs, Asklepios, J. O. Maximus, Epona, Diana, Dionysus, Hecate, Jambadule, Deloptes etc., for whom see Kazarow *PWRE*, Suppl. III, col. 1143ff. and *Denkmäler*, p. 13ff. Associated with Cybele, cf. Tudor, *Cronica numism. şi arheologică* XI (1935), p. 190ff.

[189] It was he who gave rise to the appearance of an equestrian image of the sun god, cf. Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 222, n. 11. For other equestrian divinities in relation to the Thracian Rider, see: Remy, *Musée belges* XI (1907), p. 136; Lefebvre des Noëttes, *An. du Service d. antiq. de l'Egypte* XX (1920), p. 237; Dussaud, *Syria* V (1924), p. 120ff., pl. XXXI, 4; Mouterde, *Mél. Univ. Beyrouth*, XI, 6, p. 309ff.; Gagé, *Mél. Éc. Franç.*, Rome 1926, p. 103ff.; Rostovtseff, *Syria* XIII (1931), p. 57 and *MdI*, 1934, p. 192ff.

[190] Perdnizet, *RA*, 1904, p. 26.

[191] B. Pick, *JDAI*, 1898, p. 155ff.; Perdrizet, *Rev. Numism.*, 1903, p. 319; E. Babelon, *Traité des monnaies grecques et romaines*, Paris 1904, II, 1, nos. 1062, 1467, 1482 etc. and R. Forrer, *Keltische Numismatik*, p. 203.

[192] Aelianus, *De nat. anim.*, XV, 24, and Arrianus, *Tact.*, 44. On the importance of the horse among the Thracian, Macedonian, and Illyrian peoples see Kazarow, *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Thraker*, p. 47ff. and *Denkmäler*, p. 11ff.

[193] Malten, *JDAI* XXIX (1914), p. 179 and 210; H. Hofmann, *Römische Militärgrabsteine der Donauländer*, Wien 1905, *passim*; A. Schober, *Die römischen Grabsteinen von Noricum und Pannonien*, Wien 1923, *passim*; Gr. Florescu, *I monumenti funerari romani della "Dacia superior"*, *ED* IV (1930), pp. 72-148; Em. Panaitescu, *Monumente inedite din Largiana*, Cluj 1932, p. 19. Generally the monuments with a sculptured Rider are of military origin and he is rarely accompanied by an attendant (Hofmann, 33, Schober, 116). On two funerary monuments the barbarian prostrate under the horse's hooves is met with (Schober, 191, and Hampel *AÉrt*, 1909, p. 320, p. 15).

All the same, the fact that the single Danubian Rider-God was conceived on horseback was not solely due to the marked predilection of the Thraco-Dacian world for equestrian divinities. The principal inducement must have come from the very nature of the myth. I have already indicated above (p. 159f) the relations between the Goddess who feeds the horse and the role of the animal in the heroic enterprise of the gods.

As for the dress worn by the rider god, it imitates that of different local or foreign gods, executed by the stone-carvers according to the taste of the colonists from the East or the preferences of the soldiers in the Dacian garrisons, with the addition of certain native articles of Dacian dress in the pantheon from which these gods came. If his cap is sometimes conical, resembling the pileus of the Cabiri and Dioscuri, this results from the inability of native artists to reproduce correctly the peak brought down in front of the Dacian or Phrygian cap.[195]

### 4. *The Doubling of the Single Danubian Rider*

Rostovtseff thought this phenomenon due to local initiative.[196]

---

[194] Gagé, *art. cit.*, p. 120. The cult of the Rider-God was spread particularly by the cavalry formations of the Roman Army, in Egypt and in Dacia; see: P. Perdrizet, *Negotium perambulans in tenebris. Etudes de démonologie gréco-orientale*, Paris 1922, p. 10 and D. Tudor, *Latomus* XXII (1963), p. 240ff.

[195] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 16 and Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 116. A. Schröder, *JDAI* XXVII (1912), p. 344, identifies the cap on the Danubian tablets as Dacian and opposes Ziehen (*AA*, 1904, p. 13) who wanted to make it Phrygian. Besides, it is very difficult to make out any distinction between the two types of cap in sculptures as unpretentious as the Danubian. Pârvan (*Getica*, p. 169) also tried to prove an identity between the caps worn by the Dacians on Trajan's column and those of the Danubian Riders. We note that the cap of our Riders is identical with that of Mithras, Attis, Sabazius, etc. For the rest, several articles of clothing worn by the Danubian Riders come from the domain of the Thracian Rider whose image was modelled on those of Greek funerary and votive monuments, cf. Hampel, *BpRég*, 1904, p. 46; Kazarow, *PWRE*, Suppl. III, col. 1445; *Denkmäler*, p. 9 and Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1926, p. 70.

[196] Rostovtseff, *RÉA*, 1919, p. 479. On mon. 18 both Riders are bearded, so that we cannot distinguish an unbearded and a bearded Rider together and thus define a category of monuments which might mark the transition from Class A to Class B—as the Russian scholar wishes to do.

To arrive at two Rider-Gods we have to admit the evolution and enrichment of the initial myth. The second Rider must certainly have existed as a secondary aniconic element even in the earliest form of the myth reproduced by the Class A plaques. This can be inferred from a marble plaque from Tibiscum (200), dedicated to the single Rider, but on which we see the busts of the three divinities accompanied by the celestial divinities—all in the first register. At a later stage in the story of the telling of the myth he was raised to the same rank as the first Rider, resulting in his artistic reproduction on the plaques. The artistic model for the introduction of a second rider god was roughly furnished by the example of the Dioscuri monuments[197]—an opinion accepted today by almost all the principal investigators.[198] The only exception to be noted here is that of Ianka Mladenova[199] who offers the following objections. First, the religion of the Dioscuri was confined to the Greek cities of the Black Sea littoral. Further, the reliefs of the two brother deities are very rare in the interior of the Balkan Peninsula and in Dacia. The principal emblem of the Dioscuri, the egg flanked by two snakes, can only have resulted in Mladenova's view from a lack of skill on the part of the craftsmen who made the Danubian plaques, the egg in question being in reality a mere vase (a very good point, cf. above p. 88ff). Finally, she affirms that the solar and celestial elements in the iconography of the Danubian Riders were borrowed from Mithraic reliefs.

Although Mladenova's arguments do not all seem equally acceptable, they are none the less to be borne in mind when it comes to establishing a perfect religious and artistic identity between these

[197] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 229ff.

[198] Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 70; Abramić, *Vjesnik Dalmatinsku* LIV (1952), p. 120ff.; Frova, *Studi Mistrorigo*, p. 13; Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 90. Kazarow, *AnzÖAk*, 1940, p. 28 and *Denkmäler*, p. 13, lists the monuments where the Thracian Rider is doubled under the influence of the Dioscuri.

[199] Mladenova, *Studia Dečev*, p. 554. H. Seyrig, *Revue d'Arts* 6 (1956), explains the doubling of the Danubian Rider as a mere problem of artistic symmetry imposed by the double axe (*bipennis*) borne by the single Danubian Rider. C. Picard (*RHR* CL, (1956), p. 20) rightly observes that the Dioscuri never bear the double axe and that this weapon cannot be regarded as an Anatolian monopoly. *Bipennis* is also the religious attribute of the sun and moon gods, cf. Benoit, *Heroïs. équest.*, p. 55.

two groups of monuments. When the need was felt to double the number of the Riders, the thing could only be done according to the artistic principle of confrontation. That is why this second Rider was portrayed in profile, like his partner of Class A, but this time to the left of the Goddess. Any other frontal position could hardly be invented for him and the most ancient reliefs of the Dioscuri provided the artistic model to be followed: the two Rider brothers reproduced in profile flanking a goddess. It is true that Dioscuri monuments of this type are very rare in Illyricum, Lower Moesia (Vratza, Novae, Durostorum, Orchanie, etc.), Thrace, [200] and Dacia.[201]

We must not forget, either, that the great workshops engaged in stone-carving possessed albums of models for reproducing the likenesses of divinities in current demand, according to the preferences of their customer. The Dioscuri must no doubt also have figured in these albums. Of course, the process leading to the doubling of the Riders would not have taken place mechanically, on the left or right bank of the Danube. On the other hand, it cannot have lasted, as Mladenova claims, right into the third century. In fact, the plaques 59 and 77 are also carved with a *Victoria*, who would only have made her appearance on the lower Danube in the 3rd century, but who was already recognized in provincial art from the 2nd century onwards. (cf. below, p. 123ff).

A thing I cannot accept in regard to the doubling of the Danubian Riders is the idea that it was the symbols of the Dioscuri already existing on Class A plaques which brought it about. This hypothesis of Will has already been disputed above (p. 88ff). The doubling of the Riders was due to the evolution of the myth and the iconographic model (not the religious one) was provided by the reliefs of Castor and Pollux. It was only after the doubling that the cult of the Dioscuri began to exert a strong religious influence also on that of the Danubian Riders (of Class B).

From the fact that the origin of the cult, like the sculptural formation of the plaques with one Rider, appeared on Dacian soil, together with the largest number of such examples, it is natural to infer that it was there, north of the Danube, that the religious and iconographic process of doubling took place. But it is not easy to establish which of the Class B monuments is earliest, since it is impossible to point to a datable iconographic element in the first specimens to come out of the workshops. We might suppose that among the earliest Class B pieces were those reliefs which have no fallen enemy under the belly of one of the horses, this place being sometimes occupied by a lion or a dog (24, a; 27, a; 42, b; 47, a; 62, a; 65, a; 154, b; 173, a; 182, b). But we observe also that this detail could equally well represent a local variant of the myth and not a dating element.

---

[200] Kazarow, *PWRE* VI, A, col. 527f.

[201] *CIL* III, 1287 (*Castores Augusti* à Ampelum); Hampel, *AÉrt* XXII (1903), no. 3; Tudor, *Dacia* XI-XII (1948), p. 158, no. 9 and *OR*$^3$, p. 353.

If we accept this hypothesis, however, the iconographic enrichment of the Danubian plaques in accordance with the epic evolution of the myth would have taken the following course: Class A plaques, without the fallen enemy; Class A plaques with the enemy trampled by the horses' feet; Class B plaques with a single fallen enemy; Class B plaques with an enemy trampled under the feet of each mount. Using the repertoire of the upper registers of the Class B plaques, the Dobrudja stone-carvers created the four examples of Class C, detached from the Dacian group.

This is the point at which we must examine more carefully *the group of two snakes flanking the vase or the egg* which figures on the single-Rider plaques. This religious theme according to certain theories would be "the Dioscuric element" which gave the impulse to double the number of Riders and *led finally to the identification of the two equestrian divinities with the Cabiri or Dioscuri.*

Two snakes figure in the top register of nine single-Rider reliefs (Class A). They flank a vase generally without handles, of ovoid form but not to be confused with an actual egg (9; 10; 14; 15; 16(?); 29, b; 55; 107; 108 (vases with handles); 183; 202, a; 203, a). The same theme will be found again in four Class B monuments, with two Riders, that is, (113, a; 137; and 193, B; 230).[202]

---

[202] Henzen, *BIst.*, I (1848), p. 164ff. mentions for *mon. 14* "un disco piuttosto ovale.. che è circondato da due delfini", where the vase flanked by two snakes can be identified. On mon. 18, a, there is no vase surrounded by two snakes as Buday states (*DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 104) but an eagle preparing

The egg flanked by two snakes, in proximity with the Dioscuri, is clearly visible on a relief found very probably in the Peloponnese,[203] and the vase flanked by two snakes is a very widespread Dioscuric theme.[204] No doubt the myth represented by the Danubian plaques (which is unknown to us) did contain episodes analogous to those in the story of the Dioscuri. It was probably this which prompted the stone-carvers to introduce there the emblem of the vase flanked by snakes and their lack of skill caused this vase to pass for an egg, the well-known Dioscuric symbol. It is established that the affinities between the different ancient religions had mutual artistic repercussions. Such was the case with the Thracian Rider, who also was doubled, always under the iconographic influence of the Dioscuri.[205] The analogous religious elements of the Danubian single-Rider cult with that of the Dioscuri made it easy for the Danubian plaques to adopt artistic patterns peculiar to the Dioscuric monuments. Once this adoption had taken place, the iconography of Castor and Pollux must have still further influenced our monuments.

In no case can we interpret the scenes reproduced on the Danubian Rider monuments as an emblematic representation of a dualism of Iranian type. All we have is a victory gained by two divinities of Good over the divinities of Evil. In the case of a relief found at Ratiaria (62, a), at the feet of one of the Riders there is a tortoise confronted by the ram's head appearing at the feet of the other mount. This too can be interpreted as the symbolic antagonism between Good and Evil. The ram (whose name designated also one

---

to take flight. Equally unconvincing is the same author's statement concerning the emblem of Asclepius on mon. 193, B. Credit is due to Buday for having been the first to observe in the group of the vase flanked by two snakes a symbolic element linked with the image of the Dioscuri (ibid., p. 121).

[203] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, no. 37. On the legend of the Dioscuri born from an egg see Albert, *DSDictAnt* II, 1, p. 250 and Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, p. 128. For Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 64 "the egg represents the Cosmos or the First Body in which were the elements of the material and visible world of generation".

[204] Bethe, *PWRE* V, 1, col. 1108; Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 100, n. 5; Furtwängler, in Roscher, *Lex* I, col. 1170; Albert, *art. cit.*, p. 255 and Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, p. 398. The two confronted snakes on the Danubian single-Rider monuments also symbolize the two Gods themselves (1, 43, 46).

[205] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 284ff.

of the heavenly constellations) on the Danubian plaques symbolizes the Good, the tortoise darkness and the underworld. This symbolic meaning of the tortoise is found again in Roman Christian art, where it represents an genius of Evil and darkness at war with the genii of Good and light, such as the cock.[206]

Why cannot the two Danubian Riders be identified with the Cabiri? If such were the case, the Goddess associated with them, whatever her name (Helen, Artemis, Anaitis, etc.), would have had to participate directly in the putting to death of the third brother. But nothing of the kind can be detected in our monuments. Another argument against this interpretation is the role of the snakes in the cult and monuments of the Danubian Riders. Here they are greatly honoured, while in the Cabiric legend the snake is destroyed by one of the Cabiri as an evil demon.[207] Finally, the episode of the killing of the third brother must be completely unacceptable for the Danubian plaques. Ancient authors are unanimous in telling us that there were three Cabiri brothers, one of whom was put to death by the two others, who afterwards hid his remains.[208] On the Danubian plaques we at first have only one personage killing another. Later, on most of the reliefs there are two men killing two others. We know too that the slain Cabirus was subsequently deified and worshipped as a god, which was not the case with the enemy trampled by the hooves of the Danubian Riders' horses. The two victorious Danubian Riders were both crowned by Victory for this very act and the Goddess assisted at their triumph. Other details can be added: the hammer, a weapon peculiar to the Cabiri,[209] never appears on the Danubian plaques, where the Riders are armed with the double axe, which sometimes led to confusion, always owing to the sculptors' lack of skill. Besides, there is no trace on the Danubian reliefs of phallic worship, an important ingredient in the cult of the Cabiri.[210] Equally noticeable is the absence of Hephaestus-Vulcan, so popular in the cult of the gods of Samothrace.[211]

---

[206] R. Egger, *Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Römisch-Germanische Kommission*, 1930, pp. 97-106.

[207] E. Potier, *DSDictAnt.* II, 1, p. 414. Equally wrong is the statement that the fish seen under the hooves of the Danubian Riders' horses must be a demon conquered by the Cabiri. The *pompilos* fish mentioned in Cabiric dogma was considered sacred. The problems concerning the Cabiri are the subject of detailed study in Bengt Hamberg, *Die Kabiren*, Uppsala, 1950, *passim.*

[208] See above, p. 137ff. Bloch, in Roscher, *Lex* II, 2, col. 2534 and Lenormant, *DSDictAnt.* I, 2, p. 758.

[209] Bloch, *art. cit.*, col. 2533 and Kern, *PWRE* X, 2, col. 1444.

The Cabiric myth of the slaying of the third brother is seen engraved on Etruscan mirrors, where we see a hand-to-hand fight between three foot-soldiers.[212] In these reproductions they are never shown as horsemen and no goddess assists at the killing—as is the case on the Danubian plaques. We know too that of the two Cabiri allied against their brother one was old and the other adolescent,[213] a difference in ages unknown with the Danubian Riders.

The rare elements in common to the two cults—their chthonic character, the sacrifice of the ram, the association of Hermes (46), etc.—hardly suggest a complete fusion since they are found in many other religions as well. Moreover, when there is talk of certain Cabiric elements in the Danubian Rider monuments, these are really Dioscuric elements, the iconography of which no doubt exerted a certain influence on the Danubian plaques.

In fact we cannot deny that the Danubian Rider cult was influenced by the Dioscuri, in the guise in which they were worshipped in the 2nd-3rd centuries A.D. But this influence was above all exerted iconographically, on the Class B plaques. Nor must this influence be exaggerated, since the worship of the Dioscuri in the Danubian provinces showed itself only sporadically and almost always in the immediate vicinity of the Roman garrisons, especially those of cavalry.[214] First place in this influence must be given to sculptural qualities since both pairs of equestrian gods are associated with a goddess and their arrangement is almost identical. But the Cabiro-Dioscuric triad is much more ancient, since it can be identified from the third century B.C. onward to the fourth century A.D., and its most numerous monuments date from the 2nd-3rd centuries, the period, that is, when the doubling of the Danubian Rider began and the greater part of the Class B reliefs appeared.[215]

---

[210] Kern, *art. cit.*, col. 1442. The patera borne in the hands of the Cabiri brothers is unknown to the Danubian Riders; cf. Kern, *art. cit.*, col. 1447f. and *ARW* XIX (1916-1919), p. 552. For other Cabiric symbols in the Roman period, see H. von Fritze, *Zeitschr. f. Numism.*, XXIV (1904), p. 105ff.

[211] Lenormant, *art. cit.*, p. 752.

[212] *Ibid.*, p. 771, fig. 911-914.

[213] Kern, *art. cit.*, col. 1443 and id., *Die griech. Mysterien der klass.Zeit*, Berlin, 1927, *passim.* and Hemberg, *op. cit.*, passim.

[214] Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kultus*, p. 219; Bethe, *PWRE* V, 1, col. 1092 and 1095; Albert, *art. cit.*, p. 262ff.; Furtwängler, Roscher, *Lex.* I, 1, col. 1157 and 1163 et Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, *passim*. Important inscriptions: *CIL* III, 1287 = *ILS* 3389; 2743; 14623,3. The sculptural monuments of the Dioscuri are numerous only in the Greek cities of the southern Black Sea coast, where

Thus the confronted Danubian Riders took as their artistic model the Dioscuric reliefs but all the same preserved their distinct iconographic characteristics. They are almost always represented with the features of two men at the prime of life, bearded and wearing costumes different from the Dioscuri. The latter, we must remember, are represented with the features of young, beardless men, often quite naked. Certain attributes—the cock,[216] the snake,[217] the stars,[218] etc.—are common to the two pairs but common also to too great a number of other cults for us to be able to assert categorically that they found their way on to the Danubian plaques from the Dioscuric reliefs. In both cases they are divinities of light,[219] but also of the underworld, particularly the Dioscuri in the second century A.D.[220] It was during this century that the Dioscuri began also to symbolize the two celestial hemispheres, that of night and that

---

these gods were worshipped in their quality of protective divinities against shipwreck; Bethe, *art. cit.*, col. 1192; Albert, *art. cit.*, p. 255 and Mladenova, *Studia Dečev*, p. 554.

[215] Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, p. 96 and 99 presumes a religious connection between the two Dioscuri and the two sons of Antoninus Pius and Septimius Severus.

[216] Bethe, *art. cit.*, col. 1108; Furtwängler, *art. cit.*, col. 1171; Albert, *loc. cit.*, and Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

[217] The appearance of the snake on the Danubian tablets is earlier than their contact with the Dioscuri, cf. Albert, *loc. cit.*, and Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, p. 117, n. 37.

[218] The Dioscuri symbolize the two morning and evening stars, an iconographic character found also on the Danubian tablets, cf. Bethe, *loc. cit.*, Furtwängler, *art. cit.*, col. 1154; Albert, *loc. cit.*, and Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, nos. 27-30; 43-45; 47; 48 etc.

[219] Bethe, *art. cit.*, col. 1107 and Furtwängler, *loc. cit.*

[220] Albert, *art. cit.*, p. 254. For the connections between the Dioscuri and Hecate, cf. Furtwängler, *art. cit.*, col. 1177. For the Danubian Riders see mon. 194, B.

of day.[221] We note that in certain cases the Danubian Riders also symbolized the two hemispheres.

The iconographic links between the Dioscuri and the god Mithras on the one hand and the Riders of the Class B Danubian plaques on the other occasioned a whole series of interpretations by their votaries. The vault outlined by the two snakes upright behind the two Riders and framing the principal scene right up to the busts representing the sun and moon deities symbolized the course of the stars in the heavens, where they rise and set, or in other words die and are reborn.[222] This speculative belief entered the sculpture of the Danubian plaques from the Dioscuric world where the two brothers die and are reborn, exchanging roles every day. While they lived, the Danubian Riders travelled over the celestial vault marked by the two snakes facing the busts of the Moon and the Sun, and when they died they were also symbolized by the two men prostrate under the horses' hooves. In this way the cycle from light to darkness and from life to death never ended.

However, the differences between the two groups of equestrian gods are still more striking. The practice of mysteries had not the same importance in the cult of the Dioscuri as in that of the Danubian Riders. Castor and Pollux have no attendants, their costume is completely different from that of the Danubian Riders and their physiognomy is absolutely identical one with the other[223]—elements in complete contrast with those on the Danubian plaques.

If we now proceed to examine the distribution map of the monuments of the Dioscuri associated with a goddess, we observe that their area of diffusion was the Aegean basin and that a great white patch, corresponding to Thrace, intervenes between this zone and the Danube. These reliefs of the Dioscuri associated with a goddess are absolutely lacking in the valley of the Danube and in Italy.[224]

---

[221] Philo, *De decalogo*, 56; Lucian, *Dial, deor.*, 26, 1 and Minucius Felix, *Octav.*, 27, 7. Cf. Bethe, *art. cit.*, col. 1110; Furtwängler, *art. cit.*, col. 1154; Albert, *art. cit.*, p. 253; Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 85, n. 10 and p. 301; Cook, *Zeus* II, p. 343ff; Wide *ARW* X (1907), p. 265; Cumont, *Symb. fun.*, 35ff.

[222] See below, p. 181ff.

[223] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 106; Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 63ff. also declares himself opposed to an identification of the Danubian Riders with the Cabiro-Dioscuri and would admit only mutual influences, a point of view already expressed by Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, p. 286, and Tudor, *Das Altertum* VIII (1962), p. 238. Castor and Pollux also found their way into the iconography of Jupiter Dolichenus, cf. Merlat, *JupDol*, p. 37ff.

The necessary conclusion is that it is impossible, as certain investigators have done, to identify the Danubian Riders with the Cabiri or the Dioscuri. What can be asserted, on the other hand, is that a whole series of borrowings, artistic at first, even religious later, were made by the repertoire of the Danubian Riders from the iconography of the Dioscuri as they were conceived in the 2nd-3rd centuries A.D. by the Roman world. The explanation of these borrowings is to be sought in the confusions made by the respective craftsmen on the artistic level and all the more encouraged by certain resemblances of symbolism and dogma in the two cults, both consecrated to equestrian divinities. There can thus be no question of finding the origin of the Danubian cult in the religion of the Dioscuri, which only had a certain influence upon it.

The association of the Goddess with the single Rider provides us with many indications that these are "Great Gods." The absence of certain iconographic characteristics as of certain specific attributes is a proof that they were late in entering the Roman pantheon from the lower Danubian provinces. On the other hand there is no artistic, archaeological, or epigraphic evidence of this religion having been transplanted from another region of the Roman Empire or from beyond its frontiers into the Danube valley. Quite the contrary, we can follow the modest origins of its sculptural expression on the lower Danube shores, where it was then to undergo a rapid evolution under the influence of several other religions long since established in that region.

These Danubian gods were originally humble native divinities, who had as their principal symbols the fish for the Goddess and the ram for the Rider. After her sculptural transposition the Goddess wears the aspect of Diana-Luna-Hecate, significantly influenced in cult and attributes by other goddesses such as Nemesis, Cybele, Artemis, Atargatis, Anaitis, etc. Thus she becomes "queen of the night". As is shown by her representations on certain engraved gems, her worshippers also practised magic.

---

[224] Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 100 and the map annexed.

A similar deity is revealed to us in pre-Roman Dacia by certain Daco-Scythian monuments. This was a Great Goddess of the growing and feeding earth, present here before the arrival of the Iranians who only assimilated her with their own Anaitis.[225] The Thracian peoples living south and north of the Danube, as far as the countries north of the Black Sea, had worshipped from time immemorial a Great Goddess.[226] She was a sort of Magna Mater-Cybele in the Roman period and her cult was already associated with that of a Great God from the time of free Dacia onward.[227] We also know that among the Scythians she made a pair with the god Pappas.[228] A like female deity of the Getae continued her existence under Roman domination, when—as certain inscriptions show indirectly—she underwent a process of syncretism with Bendis-Diana-Nemesis-Luna-Hecate-Vesta, etc.[229]

We do not know whether the supreme gods of the Daco-Getae—Zalmoxis and Gebeleïzis—were associated or not with a female deity, but we do know for certain that these peoples practised polytheism and possessed a pantheon rich in various deities.[230] It is thus possible that such a Great Goddess or some other secondary female divinity of the Geto-Dacian pantheon, associated with the cult of the Great Rider-God, wielder of the double-bladed axe (perhaps even Zalmoxis himself?), may by the beauty of the myth of the divine pair have attracted the attention of the colonists and

---

[225] Pârvan, *Getica*, p. 163ff.

[226] *Ibid.*, p. 457.

[227] Rostovtseff, *RÉA*, 1919, p. 462ff. Moreover a similar goddess of earth, of germination in nature, mistress of the underworld etc., existed among all ancient peoples, cf. Graillot, *Cybele*, *passim*. The common elements between Cybele and the Goddess of the Danubian tablets are numerous, e.g.: the idea of the Victory who protects the imperial family (Graillot, *op. cit.*, p. 162); mistress of the celestial world and the four cosmic elements (*ibid.*, p. 198); their association with the Dioscuri, Luna, Sol, Artemis, Demeter etc. (*ibid.*, p. 191 and 201); common symbols such as the lion, the bull, the ram (*ibid.*, p. 192 and 214); their chthonian attributes (*ibid.*, p. 200) etc. For the cult of Cybele in Dacia see M. Macrea, *Viața in Dacia romană*, Bucharest 1969, p. 369 and Vermaseren, *CCCA* (in the press).

[228] Herodotus IV, 67 and Graillot, *op. cit.*, p. 477.

[229] Pârvan, *op. cit.*, p. 156, n. 1 et C. Daicoviciu in *Istoria Romånilor*, București 1960, I, p. 334.

[230] I. I. Russu, *Religia Geto-Dacilor*, in *AISC* V (1944-1948) p. 80ff.

Roman soldiers established north of the Danube. Until the conquest of Dacia these Gods and their myth could not have found sculptural expression since the Dacian religion was aniconic.[231] On the initiative of these colonists the sculptural model of the two Great Gods may have been constructed, copied from that of the Thracian Rider reliefs and, with the doubling of the Rider, having recourse also to the sculpture of the Dioscuri.

Subsequently the divinities of oriental origin in their turn intervened, contributing to the development and growing complexity of the myth both cultic practices and mysteries. This development and this complexity must have taken the Danubian religion far from its simple, native aspect. The process I have described must also have been affected by influences from the cults of Cybele, Diana, Dea Syria, as practised in the third century A.D.,[232] and thus added to the Dioscuric and Mithraic influences.

### 5. *Organized Religion or Mere Phylacteries?*

The question whether the Danubian Rider plaques belonged to an organized religion or were simply of the nature of amulets is an important one, but has been raised, as I have shown above, only by Cumont.[233] This great Belgian specialist in the history of oriental religions did not believe that the Danubian plaques were the sculptural expression of a sect with its own religious and ritual organization. For him the Danubian Rider monuments are no more than modest representations in the class of phylacteries.

A part of the monuments, those of small size, I myself had already shown in 1937 to have been intended for personal wear by the votaries of the cult. They must have considered these small objects (engraved gems, lead medallions) as endowed with magico-prophylactic qualities.[234] But I have never agreed that this could have been the purpose served by all the monuments.[235] Cumont's generalization in this sense was likewise disputed by Kazarow,[236] relying on a series of Danubian plaques whose votive character is undeniable, both because of their size and of the presence of certain details in the sculptures. The problem, however, can be finally disposed of by an appeal to Will,[237] with his distinction between a "cultic relief", that is a sacred effigy, and a simple relief or other object of votive and narrative character. In any temple or even in a modest *sacellum*, wrote Will, there is only one representation of the divinity concerned. This is of large size, intended for direct worship and displayed in the place of honour. The remainder of the reliefs, of small size and displayed in different parts of the sanctuary, are no more than humble *ex-voto* objects for ordinary use.

---

[231] Pârvan, *op. cit.*, p. 639.

[232] Their cult was widespread in the Danubian provinces: cf. *CIL* III, *index*; Domaszewski, *Religion röm. Heeres*, p. 53; Macrea, *op. cit.*, p. 371 and 375; Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 95ff.; Cumont, *DSDictAnt.* IV, 2, p. 1595 and *PWRE* IV, col. 2242.

[233] Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 69ff. See also above, p. 33f.

Their modest dimensions, the absence of statues and temples (at least not hitherto identified), would be an argument, according to Will, in favour of the majority, but not all, of these pieces having served as icons or amulets. These would be in particular the Class A monuments, so similar to those of the Thracian Rider, which must have been consecrated in modest sanctuaries, either of their own or shared with similar deities. At any rate, Will concludes,[238] elements of their repertoire such as the banquet and the *criobolium* must necessarily have required some special building reserved for the cult. If it were claimed that such ritual acts of cult or mysteries were lodged in the temples of other divinities, it would be necessary that a very great number of Danubian plaques should have been found in them. But this is not the case.

---

[234] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 204; and above, p. 75. The same view in Oroszlán, *DolgSzeged*, 1943, p. 158ff.; Picard, *RHR*, 1956, p. 20; Frova, *Studi Mistrorigo*, p. 13; Pelikán, *Sbornik Bratislava*, 1958, p. 263; Benoit, *Héroïs. équest.*, p. 93 and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 57.

[235] Tudor, *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961) p. 329ff.

[236] Kazarow, *AnzÖAk*, 1940, p. 30; Frova, *loc. cit.*, is of the opinion that the Danubian tablets were a combination of votive objects and amulets.

[237] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 19ff.

[238] *Ibid.*, p. 31ff. The initiation of the naked *mystes* (cf. Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 272ff.) demanded a closed religious building. Even the *criobolium* took place in a spot protected from indiscreet views. It had to be effected in the open air because of the tree from which the ram was hung. In reality this tree was a short trunk trimmed of its branches (Tudor, *op. cit.*, p. 266 and *Dacia* N.S. V, 1961, p. 330, n. 61). The tree could thus have been planted in the middle of the room designed for the *criobolium* and there it would have had a sacred character; see also Picard, *RHR*, 1956, p. 25.

For a definite clarification of the problem posed by Cumont, we must begin by observing that this in its beginnings was a local religion, Daco-Getan and aniconic, which found sculptural expression at the hands of provincial craftsmen, Greek, oriental, or Roman.[239] These craftsmen used models already imposed by older cults, of divinities whose mythology had some kinship with that of the Danubian Riders. From the earliest Danubian plaques onwards —most of them in stone—their repertoire of symbols indicates an occult tendency, which was to increase in step with the organization and development of the practice of mysteries by the cult. This character is clearly discernible on most of the Danubian reliefs.

I have already noticed elsewhere[240] that their *corpus* also includes pieces of large size (cf. above, p. 70) which could not have served as amulets. From their proportions these pieces could perfectly well have done duty as central images fixed in the place of honour inside temples or chapels. We may generalize: all those Danubian plaques which by their form and weight were not easy to carry on the person, whether made of coarse stone or lead, could not have served as talismans, phylacteries, or amulets. They needed a fixed place and such a place could only have been inside a cult edifice.

The fact that the Danubian plaques must really have been the expression of an organized cult is attested also by the harmony of the scenes in their sculptural repertoire. We cannot quote Cumont's views in support of this, since he only sees in them a dense jumble of symbols due to some speculative magus. If we review the cultic reliefs of the period (Mithras, the Thracian Rider, Jupiter Dolichenus, Sabazius, etc.), we find no other group but that of the Danubian plaques with such a harmonious and constant ordering of the different elements fundamental to the cult in narrative registers: the principal myth, the aspects of the cult, the mystery scenes, the sacred banquet, the *criobolium*, the symbols, etc. All these elements are arranged according to their nature, religious or cultic, in the upper and lower registers. By their richness and the variety of their scenes the Danubian plaques are superior to all other cult monuments of the same period, including the Mithraic reliefs.[241] The modest amulets and phylacteries of other cults never show such a careful arrangement of the religious repertoire, such a clear narration of mythical facts.

---

[239] See above, p. 142ff. Kazarow, *PWRE* VI, A, col. 475; *Denkmäler*, p. 3ff.; Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 284 and Tudor, *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961), p. 330.

[240] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 203ff.

There must be some explanation for the absence (at least until now) of votive inscriptions giving the names of the two Riders, as also for the absence of temples dedicated to them. And this explanation must undoubtedly include the limited number of these monuments, their rather restricted area of diffusion, and the strictly secret nature of the cult. It is not a question of searching for sanctuaries dedicated to the Danubian Riders in any place where plaques have been found. These sanctuaries must above all be looked for in the urban centres.[242] In this connection we note that up to the present moment *anathemata* of the Danubian Riders[243] have been found in only one sanctuary dedicated to a related deity, the London Mithraeum (181). It must then be admitted that in many places where sanctuaries special to the Danubian Rider-Gods could not be dedicated they became θεοὶ σύνναιοι or σύμβωμοι in company with other divinities who gave them lodging.

---

[241] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 353, has rightly emphasized this situation. He has clearly illuminated the relations between the two religions. At the moment when the Danubian tablets appeared the Mithraic bas-reliefs had long since taken shape. The snake, the raven, the eagle, the ram, the bull, the lion, the cock, the symbolic group of the cosmical elements, and so on, are artistic and religious themes which they had in common. I never formulated a theory "of the Mithraic character of the Danubian Rider cult", as attributed to me by Will (*loc. cit.*), but only demonstrated the influence of Mithras on the two Rider-Gods. No author has accepted the hypothesis that the Danubian religion was formed "in the shadow of Mithras", but all of them have established that there were real, late contacts between the two cults. Nobody, in regard to the relations of Mithras with the Danubian Riders, had any idea of "tying the cultic aspect to the iconographic data" (Will, *op. cit.*, p. 403).

[242] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 200ff. and *Dacia* V (1961), p. 331. The architectural framings of the Danubian tablets (45, 55, 127, 132, 133, 135, 147, 148) and some temple-shaped buildings in their registers (34, c; 56, c) are not certain evidence of the existence of special cult edifices, cf. Chapouthier, *RÉA*, 1939, p. 66, n. 1. Thus the theories of certain authors (Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 32, n. 2 and Abramić, *Glasnik-Sarajevo* LI, 1936, p. 11, n. 1 and *Serta Hoffilleriana*, p. 307) concerning the appearance of such cult edifices in the repertoire of the Danubian tablets remain illusory.

[243] In a *Mithraeum* at Sarmizegetusa bas-reliefs of the Thracian Rider, too, have been discovered (cf. Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 34). Besides, the worshipper who offered a votive tablet first inscribed his own name in the dedication and rarely the gods' names (cf. Will, *ibid.*, p. 32, n. 4). This is the case with our mon. 29.

There is another circumstance confirming that we here have to do with an organized and independent religion. That is the intensification of the relations between the Danubian Rider cult and other cults in particular after the introduction of two confronted Riders on to the Danubian plaques. These relations are attested among other things by the normal phenomenon which in their case I state once more. They were receivers and givers of influence. Of course, such mutual contacts must be looked for only in those regions in which the Danubian Rider cult was diffused. This is also the explanation of the fact that certain figurative elements on the Danubian plaques are no more than the usual κοινή of cult or workshop, derived from contacts and resemblances of certain religions with a related theology.[244]

Such considerations, taken together with the presence of certain Mithraic elements, have prompted me to accord great importance to the part played by the influence of the Mithraic religion on that of the Danubian Riders. And this influence can be explained by the great quantity of monuments of the Iranian god found in the area of diffusion of the Danubian plaques. This in no way means, of course, that I wish to minimize the part played by other influences or contacts.[245] Nobody can deny that the theme of the sacred banquet on the Danubian reliefs was in fact borrowed from the Mithraic repertoire,[246] although this is a usual theme in a good number of religions. A direct allusion to a communion of this kind is made by the four Dobrudja plaques (96, 98, 102, 103) on which the tables, vases, and foods reveal the sacred meal offered to the Riders by the Goddess, after the fashion of Sol feasting Mithras.[247] In no case can these four reliefs be described as talismans, and such scenes must necessarily presuppose the presence of a temple or at least a small sacred edifice.

---

[244] I agree with Will's remark (*Rel. cult.*, p. 219) that "rien n'est plus anonyme et voyageur qu'un motif artistique", but his tendency to eliminate all Mithraic influence from the Danubian tablets is not right. Cautes and Cautopates (46), Sol and Luna, the symbols of the four Elements (lion-vase-snake-cock) etc., found on the Danubian tablets, assuredly constitute artistic and religious borrowings from Mithraism. We note also elements in common between the Danubian tablets and Dolichenian monuments, understandable in the age of syncretism, when Jupiter Dolichenus too acquired solar, cosmic, military, and funerary attributes, etc., for which see Merlat, *Rép. JupDol.*, p. 420 (index).

[245] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 244 and 290. Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 68, denied the Mithraic influence and accepted only that of the Dioscuri, an opinion refuted by Picard, *RHR*, 1956, p. 20. Frova, *Studi Mistrorigo*, p. 13, em-

The Danubian Rider cult was crystallized and organized at a period when other cults with which it had some kinship were already long established along the lower Danube. It was an age when "it is difficult to distinguish the web of mutual influences that characterizes the history of the oriental religions in the second and third centuries." In organizing its own mysteries the new religion with its newly created sculptural expression must have drawn on the experience of its predecessors. A series of sacred formulae (τὰ λεγόμενα) expressed in the course of its ceremonies, a spectacular display of certain cult objects (τὰ δεικνύμενα) and certain images (σύμβολα) reproducing certain cult scenes (τὰ ὁρώμενα), followed by the arrangement of the liturgical drama inspired by the myth of the divinities concerned (τὰ δρώμενα)—these are all moments of importance figuring on the Danubian plaques. But all these moments must have been introduced and organized after contact with the mysteries of Mithras, Cybele, Sabazius, and the rest. Among the esoteric cultic practices must be counted also the scene of the symbolic death of the initiate (cf. below, p. 243ff).

---

phasized the influence of Mithras and Magna Mater, while Will, *op. cit.*, p. 44, accepts also that of Sabazius. Pelikán, *Sbornik-Bratislava*, 1958, p. 263, suggests a considerable Phrygian influence. This he thinks would have produced in the Danubian tablets a powerful symbiosis between the Rider-God and the Goddess of Indo-European origin (Magna Mater), two deities who in the Roman period had a triple character, celestial, terrestrial, and chthonian. But this process of syncretism had in large part been demonstrated already by myself, in 1937.

[246] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 288 and Benoit, *Heroïs. équest.*, p. 43. Thus Will's statement (*Rel. cult.*, p. 91, n. 1) that "le caractère mithriaque du culte danubien repose sur des rapprochements aussi fallacieux" is not correct.

[247] Tudor, *Pontica* V (1972) p. 503-511.

Let me say, then, in conclusion that Cumont's attempt to transform the Danubian Rider monuments into simple phylacteries, amulets, or talismans, was destined to fail from the fact, above all, of the actual content of the plaques. Nor has any other specialist followed in his footsteps. It is certain then that we here have to do with an organized and independent religion, clearly expressed in the repertoire of the Danubian plaques.

The principal deity of these plaques is female. No doubt her presence must have drawn a number of women of the Danubian provinces to the cult and mysteries of the Rider-Gods. The attachment of women to this cult must have been all the greater from the fact that they were systematically excluded from the practice of the Mithraic mysteries. This feature may have meant that the Danubian Rider cult did not "compete" with that of Mithras, by which it was largely influenced. The influences were encouraged by the fact that the votaries of Mithras were free to take part in other esoteric cults.[248] If votive inscriptions had been allowed on the Danubian plaques they would have told us more about the participation of women in this cult, as do the monuments dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus.[249]

## 6. *Gnostic and Magical Elements*

The engraved gem from the Guardabassi collection is undoubtedly an *abraxas* without the characteristic inscriptions but in any case recognisable from the monster figured on it (228, b, B). It is a fantastic figure: a cock's head on the bust of a Roman soldier (with cuirass, *balteus*, shield, lambrequins, and *paludamentum*) holding a whip raised in the right hand and with legs in the form of snake's bodies, the whole surrounded by seven stars (three of which are shattered) recalling the seven planets. There is today an abundant literature and a variety of opinions—as might be expected—about the gems engraved with this cockatrice or basilisk their meaning and their date.[250] This sinister figure with a cock's head, called Iao,

---

[248] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 186.

[249] Merlat, *Rép JupDol.*, p. 141 and 162.

[250] F. Cabrol-H. Leclercq, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie* I, col., 127f.; Riess, *PWRE* I, col. 109; Ganschinietz, *PWRE* IX, col. 709; G. Bruston,

Sabaoth, Adonaïos, Semesilam, Abraxas, etc., is of Persian origin. It is connected with the gnosticism of the heretic Basilides, of the 2nd century A.D.[251]

There is nothing surprising in the appearance of gnostic elements on the Danubian Rider monuments (189, B?; 228, B). The Danubian plaques in fact are a veritable mosaic of the artistic and theological κοινή of their age, especially as concerning the world of the mysteries. The repertoire shows us that they have many links with quite a number of other cults (the Thracian Rider, Mithras, Cybele, Jupiter Dolichenus, Isis, the Dioscuri, and so on) and borrowed something from each one. The mystery side of the Danubian Rider religion led its votaries to borrow, from magical papyruses, from *tabellae defixionum*, from gnostic gems (likewise called Basilidean), and the like, unintelligible words, blasphemies, magical formulae, and other mystical expressions designed to impress the thinking, seeing, and hearing of ignorant votaries. By such means mysterious beings were invoked, inhabitants of heaven, earth, and hell, to make sure of their help in the fight against Evil. That is why the greater part of the engraved gems connected with the Danubian Rider cult belong to the most popular category of such objects, that of amulets bearing symbols and unintelligible inscriptions (188, 189, 191, 192, 193, 194, 197, 228). The *gemma abraxea* of Perugia (228) is half linked with the Danubian Rider cult (face A), half (face B) with the practices of the heretic Christian Basilidean sect. Perhaps too another engraved gem (cf. 189, suppl.) had the same double quality. At all events, these religious documents of mixed quality belong to the final phase of development of the Danubian Rider cult (3rd-4th centuries). It was the age in which these amulet gems were thought

---

*RA*, 1922, p. 77; Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (Michigan Univ. Stud. Hum. ser. 49), 1950, supplemented, in *Hesperia* 1951, p. 301ff. and 1954, p. 138ff.; Martin Nilsson, *Harvard Theological Review* 44 (1951), p. 61ff.; A. Barb, *Hommages W. Deonna*, Bruxelles 1957, p. 76ff; Delatte-Derchain, *Intailles*, p. 233ff. In Roman Dacia abraxas objects have been found at Orlea, Romula and Porolissum; cf. Tudor, *Stud. Cerc. de Numismatică* III (1970), p. 379; Gh. Popilian, *ibid.*, V (1971) p. 211ff. L. Teposu-David, *Stud. Cerc. Ist. Veche* X (1959), p. 257ff.

[251] M. P. Nilsson, *Gesch. d. Griech. Religion II, Die hellenist. u. röm. Zeit*, München, 1950, p. 590; cf. also Giglioli, *Arch. Class.*, III (1951), p. 206.

to be endowed with therepeutic and prophylactic virtues and were thus worn as talismans by the members of the sect. At the same time these gnostic gems served also as tokens of recognition amongst votaries or badges of the rank occupied by their wearer in the hierarchy of the mysteries of a pagan cult. We note that usually the figurative and epigraphic elements of magical and gnostic nature were engraved on the reverse of the gem, that is to say on the face which remained hidden if the stone was mounted in a finger-ring (188, B; 189, B-suppl.; 191, B; 192, B; 194, B; 228, B). Apart from the indecipherable inscriptions (188, B; 189, A-B; 194, B), the presence of certain divinities directly connected with occult practices, like Nemesis and Hecate (194, B; 195, c), once again underlines the magical side of these objects.[252]

The gems of gnostic and magical character belong to an age when lead, as the preeminently magical metal, was widely used in the production of the Danubian plaques. And it was precisely at this period that the most characteristic intagli with the cock-headed snakefoot, the principal god of magicians, were carved.[253]

[252] Delatte-Derchain, *Intailles*, p. 191, no. 254bis and p. 193ff. In the tombs they could continue to do the duties they had done among the living, that is as talismans and amulets, cf. Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 31.

[253] *Ibid.*, p. 23ff.

## PART FOUR

# ELEMENTS OF THE SKY AND OF NATURE

The fundamental myth of the whole Danubian cult is pictured on the principal field of the plaques, but in order to analyse and understand it completely the reliefs must be studied as a whole. In the registers above it are ranged important elements of the celestial world—the busts of Sol and Luna, the solar chariot, the snakes widely buttressing the cosmos over the deities' heads, the morning and evening stars, the ordinary stars, the raven, the triad of busts, the lunar crescent, the *lucernae,* the eagle, and so on. Some of these have already been analysed in the chapter on symbols.

The celestial symbols are to be found on the earliest Danubian plaques, and on almost all the monuments from then on. As the religion acquires momentum, these elements become more and more frequent and comprehensive. This is not the case, however, with the natural elements, which remain infrequent and occur only on the Class B pieces.

### 1. *Sol and Luna*

Sol and Luna are the divinities identified with most assurance on the Danubian plaques. It is only on very rare reliefs that they do not appear. Their absence is then to be explained by inadvertence, of the individual craftsman who made the monument, or by lack of space (45, 46, 47, 78, 90, 98, 102, 103, 114, 188, 189, 195, 196). Most often these divinities are reproduced in bust, but sometimes also in the form of the sun's disc or the lunar crescent or in the cosmic chariots. In keeping with their place in the cosmos they are figured in the upper part of the register, either in the corners or at the very centre. In only one example is a register with the bull placed above the busts of Sol and Luna (29, b). It is none the less true that quite often the busts of these two divinities are carved in such a rudimentary manner that they can only be recognized from the place they occupy on the plaque. They are figured in profile, facing one another from opposite sides of the plaques.

Generally it is Sol who is seen to the spectator's left, that is on the right hand of the array of figures. But in exceptional cases the places are interchanged, with Luna on the spectator's left (15, a; 42, a; 71, a; 81, b; 120, a; 137, b; 191, A). Two explanations have been offered for this arrangement of the sun and moon deities. According to Saxl,[1] the Danubian craftsmen rejected the Oriental system which placed Sol-Helios on the right. Apparently the artist of the original design imagined himself facing south so that for him the Sun travelled from left to right over the vault of heaven. Sometimes, too, though rarely, Sol and Luna occupy positions assigned by chance, but then they are not accompanied by other elements.

The busts of the sun and moon deities figure on the Class A plaques in 13 cases, in most of which, however, the drawing is rudimentary, with indications merely of some details of clothing (1, b; 29, b; 58, a; 59, a; 64, a; 79; 106, a; 183, a; 200, a; 202, a; 203, a). In one case only Sol's clothing is fastened at the left shoulder by a circular brooch (9, a). While on the Class B reliefs the sun's nimbus and the moon's crescent are frequently indicated as marks of recognition for these divinities (42, a; 113, b; 187, a; 189; 191, B; 192, A, a; 197, a), on those of Class A there is only one case in which Sol's head is shown haloed with rays and the horns of the crescent sprouting from Luna's shoulders (174).

On the Class B monuments, the two busts are figured with more circumstance and accompanied with various symbols. In a good number of them Sol is shown with radiate head (the number of rays is variable) and Luna bearing on her head or shoulders the two horns of the crescent (6; 34, b; 37, a; 42, a; 48, b; 57, a; 71, a; 72, a; 75, a; 81, b; 83, b; 120, a; 125, c; 126, c; 135, a; 137, b; 140, a; 162, b; 190, a; 191, a; 193, A, a; 194, A, a; 199, a). Some Pannonian lead roundels show Sol's head surrounded by a constant number of (rays 120, a; 125, c; 126, c; 162, b), but no religious significance can be attached to this detail. The same cannot be said, however, of the two cases where Sol has a nimbus of 7 rays (37, a and 140, a)—a known symbolic number (ἐπτάκτις). Another time, Sol's breast is arrayed with a *balteus* (101). He is likewise elegantly equipped with bow and quiver at his back, on the lead plaques from Romula (34, b). A less common image is that where he has a star on his forehead and a torch in his hand (135, a). Finally, in several cases the craftsman has put a whip in his hand (37, a; 75, a; 83, b; 127, b; 132, a; 133, a; 135, a; 194, A, a; 228, a). The bust of Luna in a single case wears the crescent horns on her shoulders as well as on her forehead (37, a).

---

[1] Saxl, *Mithras,* p. 22, n. 3

Worthy of separate mention is the reproduction of Sol in the quadriga, as he is figured exclusively on the Pannonian lead plaques (127, b; 132, b; 133, b; 135, a). He is shown full face, flying in his chariot harnessed with four horses, his right hand raised to bless the world and drive out the evil spirits. In his left hand he holds the globe of earth, replaced sometimes by the whip with which he drives his team. He is dressed in a tunic and cloak flying behind him. His head is crowned with a seven-rayed nimbus. The *plumbarii* have cast the palm of his right hand larger than the laws of proportion would warrant to draw attention to the fact that by this gesture the god is driving out the demons who had crept out upon the earth during the night.[2]

In Pannonian plaques of a certain type we see, besides the solar quadriga, a repetition of the busts of Sol and Luna (135, a), their hair dressed in the fashion of the years around 300 A.D.[3] The torch borne by Sol is an image of the heat he gives out and the beneficial light which he projects on to the world. We find the same symbol in the hands of the Dioscuri.

Sol in his quadriga placed at the centre of the register indicates the sun's position at noon. This presence of the solar quadriga on the Pannonian lead reliefs is good evidence to date them to the period of *Sol Invictus*, that is, the third century, and to the age of

---

[2] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 122. The same explanation is given of the hands raised with palms open outward as seen on funerary stelae. It was believed that this gesture could avert the demons and profaners menacing the tomb; cf. Cumont, *Notices épigraphiques*, p. 3 and R. Dussaud, *Notes de myth. syrienne* II-IX, Paris 1905 p. 117ff.

[3] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 247.

Aurelian and Probus especially, when the same theme was likewise frequent on the coinage. Credit must be given to Hampel[4] for having been the first to emphasize this point. But it would be a mistake to limit the appearance of Sol in his quadriga solely to the reigns of these two emperors. The stylistic qualities of the Pannonian plaques figuring the solar chariot (127, a; 132, a; 133, a; 135, a) are evidence of the evolution of several types from the age of the Severi until the second half of the third century.

In a single case, on a Terracina relief (176, a), we see Sol's bust twice repeated as a frame for that of Luna with the crescent horns sprouting from her shoulders. This solar triad is flanked by two serpents, the bodies of which describe an arc figuring the vault of heaven. No doubt, in the Terracina craftsman's conception, Sol's double presence signified the rising and the setting sun.

We can also interpret as a symbolic image of Sol the disc above and between the cosmic serpents (45, a) or the two discs (the other being the moon?) flanking the Rider's head on one of the reliefs (79). The limited space of an engraved gem (189, a) shows us only the lunar crescent flanked by two cosmic serpents and arranged above the Goddess's head. On another engraved gem the sun and moon deities are represented by a crescent and an eight-rayed wheel (187, a).

The place reserved on the Danubian plaques for the sun and moon deities, the manner in which they are there represented, and the symbols and attributes which accompany them are combined evidence that the elements concerned were borrowed from Mithraic reliefs of much earlier date than our own monuments. Recent work on this subject has still further emphasized the solar character of the Danubian Riders. This idea was ventilated and exhaustively discussed in my monograph published in 1937.[5] The iconographic adoption of the busts of Sol and Luna was due to the religious kinship between the two cults, marked especially by their solar beliefs.[6] While granting the predominance of the image of Sol invictus in his quadriga in the time of Aurelian,[7] it must also be recognized that he was also extremely frequent on engraved gems and coins before this emperor's reign.[8] The period was one in which men believed that the reproduction of the sun and moon deities accompanied by personifications of the Winds made the objects concerned into talismans for conducting (ἡγεμών) their souls to the immortality of the stars.[9]

---

[4] Hampel *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 350ff. and Vermaseren, *Mithra*, p. 54.

[5] Tudor, *ED* VII, pp. 228, 234 and 247ff.

[6] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 274.

[7] Franz Altheim, *Die Soldatenkaiser*, Frankfurt a.M. 1938, p. 277ff. and

Seven rays to a nimbus occur twice on the Danubian plaques, but this symbolic number was much more frequent on the Mithraic reliefs.[10] On the other hand, the Mithraic repertoire makes less frequent use of the image of Sol alone in his quadriga[11] or in bust with whip in hand.[12] The Mithraic repertoire usually shows Sol in the company of the Iranian god, voyaging together in the celestial chariot towards the spheres of the stars. From the artistic point of view the image of Sol in the quadriga is better executed on the Danubian plaques than on the Mithraic monuments, where Sol and Mithras are never shown front face but only side face. Very probably when the Pannonian *plumbarii* introduced this theme into their repertoire it was not the Iranian monuments which inspired them but a different source, and the model they took was that provided by engraved gems and coins.

---

Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 296ff. and 330. Cf. also Tudor, *ED* VIII, p. 248 and *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961), p. 333, n. 8. Will, *loc. cit.*, sees a connection between the abundant finds at Sirmium of plaques showing the solar chariot and the fact that the emperor Aurelian was born in this city (*Vita Aureliani*, 4,2; 5,5); cf. also Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 59ff.

[8] Tudor, *Apulum* VI (1967), p. 217, and the bibliography, n. 33. On a silver overlay discovered in a tomb at Elis and dating from the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. we find the same scene to represent Sol in his four-horse chariot: cf. F. H. Marshall, *Catalogue of the Jewellery, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman, in the Departments of Antiquities, British Museum*, London 1911, p. 239, no. 2108, pl. XL. Cf. also Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 329, and P. H. L. Orange, *"Sol invictus Imperator" ein Beitrag zur Apotheose, Symbolae Osloenses* XIV (1935), p. 89ff.

[9] Cumont, *Pisciculi*, p. 70ff. The radiate nimbus of the Sun also crowns the head of the Thracian Rider; cf. Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 11. In the catalogue of W. Deonna, *RHR* 132, p. 5ff. the celestial divinities are missing without any explanation!

[10] Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, p. 417 (index).

[11]. *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid.* Cf. Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 102ff. and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 58ff.

The image of Luna, bearing the crescent on her forehead or on her shoulders, is extremely frequent in Mithraic sculpture. As a counterpart to Sol she was given the same youthful aspect. It is always in the lower Danube region that we detect in the Mithraic repertoire certain deviations from the place traditionally ascribed by tradition to the two deities of sun and moon.[13] It must also be noted that the solar chariot of the Pannonian plaques is regularly flanked by two great stars: *Phosphoros* and *Hesperos*, which in the Mithraic sculptures are torch-bearers.

Given the Mithraic origin in general of the solar and celestial elements on the Danubian plaques, it is natural that their interpretation should accord with Mithraic theology. Certain revelations contained in the hymns of Mazdaism or in some of the Stoic metaphors indicate that the chariot of Helios and his four horses symbolized the four Elements constituting the universe: fire, air, water, earth. These beliefs gave rise to different symbolic legends for each of the four horses representing the primal Elements. They were credited with great power over the past and the future, as well as on the entire ordering of Nature.[14] The fact that the *plumbarii* of the Pannonian plaques placed the group of Sol in the quadriga in the place of honour in their repertoire was because the astrologers considered the god as the καρδία τοῦ κόσμου, determinant of all celestial, physical, moral, and other phenomena.[15] The light of the sun puts demons to flight, awakens the dead and gives them immortality in heaven.

The central position of *Sol Invictus* in the quadriga, dominating the whole repertoire of the Pannonian plaques, shows also the syncretistic tendency of the solar cult in assimilating all other religions. Quite a number of emperors of the third century A.D. thought that nothing but the cult of Helios and the stars could put an end to the religious anarchy of the Empire. The solar theology was considered capable of embracing by assimilation all the pagan religions. Consequently it was to Sol that the terrestrial globe was entrusted as a symbol of his domination of the Cosmos. Moreover, the terrestrial globe was an allusion to the limitless power on earth of the Roman ruler, associated as he was with the cult of the sun.[16] The authority given to the solar cults by their alliance with the throne can easily be inferred from the harsh criticism made of them by Firmicus Maternus, even though he does name Sol *summus deus*.[17]

---

[13] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 122, n. 3.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 125, 298 etc. For the explanation of the myth, see also Cumont, *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 119ff. Campbell, *MithrIcon*, pp. 326ff. and 385 has shown that the circular cosmic flight of Sol, in his quadriga, determined the succession of the seasons. The chariot's flight constituted the principle of cosmic creation and of order in human life.

[15] Cumont, *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 129 et *La théologie solaire du paganisme romain*, p. 5ff. (*Mém. prés. par div. savants Acad. Inscr.*, t. XII/2, Paris 1909).

The solar cult gathered about itself the whole pagan pantheon in its supreme struggle with Christianity. It was round the Iranian Mithras that the main force of heliolatry was concentrated. He was a deity who by his numerous affinities with other religions could assemble a vast syncretism of universalist tendencies—as Ernest Renan has observed. It is natural enough, then, to find that the Danubian plaques have not escaped his influence whether on the artistic or on the religious level.

The cult of Sol in the cold countries of the Danube must have found many votaries among the farmers.[18] For them he was without doubt always a friend, whereas in excessively hot regions he was regarded often enough as an enemy.[19]

The most recent and also the most important investigator of Mithraic iconography and ideology, Campbell, reaches the conclusion that Sol's gesture, palm open wide, reproduced on the Danubian plaques must represent a transposition of the Mithraic apotheosis and that "the quadriga at the top may suggest the ultimate Apogenesis and the escape from the wheel of birth."[20] The horses harnessed to the solar chariot moved with dizzy velocity from left to right, above the two great stars placed near the Riders' heads, emblems, according to Campbell, of the Dioscuri.

---

[16] Schlachter-Gisinger, *Der Globus*, Berlin 1927, p. 64; Marbach, *PWRE* II, 3, col. 907ff. and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 60.

[17] Firmicus Maternus, *De err. prof. relig.*, V, 1; VII, 7 and VIII. Cf. Cumont, *Théol. solaire*, p. 1ff. and A. Piganiol, *L'Empereur Constantin*, Paris 1932, p. 22, and Paul Schmidt, *"Sol Invictus. Betrachtungen zu spätrömischer Religion und Politik"*, *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1943, pp. 169-252.

[18] Plinius, *Nat. hist.* II, 5. Cf. also Cumont, *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 193f.

[19] Cumont, *Théol. sol.*, p. 3, notes that the cult of the Sun in hot regions has quite different characteristics from that in cold regions.

[20] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 331ff. Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 59, identifies the hemispheres in the two stars and "the whip symbolizes the impelling and compelling force of fire in the material world". Cf. also l'Orange, *op. cit.*, p. 86ff.

Ochsenschlager for his part thinks that Sol must be interpreted on these plaques "as the fiery character who rules with visible powers as an intellect and leadership principle".[21] His sovereignty over the celestial and germinative forces is exercised beside that of Luna.[22] He thinks that the dominant image of *Sol Invictus* in the quadriga symbolized not only his role of "rulership" of the material world on the cosmogonic level, but that he "may also symbolize from a mystical point of view the victory or the passage of the rational soul into and out of the physical body with a promise of eventual escape from the cycle of generation'.[23]

It is also likely that the Danubian Rider cult borrowed from Mithraic theology other speculative beliefs concerning the soul and the planets—problems likewise analysed by Campbell.[24] They are thus summarized by Ochsenschlager: "Sol would represent perceptivity and substance of image, Luna is the visible cause of *physis* and image of growth, and the central figure represents, perhaps, the substance of desire which compels souls into generation."[25] In other words, Sol represents the initial impulse, while Luna was the attribute of intellect and of thought, the creator of energy, of the cosmic soul, of love, and so on—a sort of *Magna Mater*, in fact.

Could the worship of these two heavenly bodies have given rise to a long procession of superstitions and beliefs with an eschatological foundation? According to the theories of Pythagoras' disciples, the human spirit is a tiny part of the sun. After the death of the individual this tiny part rejoins the star from which it was detached. For them the sun was the central axis of human life, of terrestrial fauna and flora, of the mathematical succession of natural phenomena.[26] The moon was the first stage where souls rested before resuming their voyage across the ether towards different stars—an eschatological doctrine of astrological character which lasted till the complete eclipse of ancient paganism.[27]

---

[21] Ochsenschlager, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

[22] E. G. Suhr, *Before Olympos*, New York 1967, p. 111 (after Ochsenschlager).

[23] Ochsenschlager, *loc. cit.*

[24] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 66ff.

[25] Ochsenschlager, *op. cit.*, p. 60-61.

[26] Cumont, *Théol. sol.* p. 17f.

It is difficult to establish the "relationship" of Sol and Luna with the three Danubian divinities. In the Mithraic religion, Sol was the son of Mithras and the go-between of the *mystae* with the Iranian god.[28] Very probably it was this circumstance which was Buday's starting-point[29] in his attempt to demonstrate that Sol on the Danubian plaques represented the father of the two Riders assimilated to the Dioscuri.

Through her multiple attributes the religious heritage of Luna managed to influence certain aspects of the cult of the Goddess on the Danubian plaques. We know that she was regarded as a deity endowed with some of the attributes of Diana and Hecate. Moreover, a certain *rapprochement* between the three Danubian divinities and some of the attributes peculiar to the sun and moon deities seems possible from a study of some of their monuments. For example, on the Cades engraved gem (197, b) the Riders wear the radiate crown.[30] Still more eloquent is the Terracina relief (176, a). The triad of busts surmounting the principal scene is a celestial form of the Danubian deities. The Riders there wear a solar nimbus and the Goddess the two horns of the crescent on her shoulders. These are definite indications of their assimilation with Sol and Luna, whose path through the heavens is indicated by the two serpents flanking them. On this relief, then, one of the Riders represents the rising sun, the other the setting sun—a symbolism which can be related with the story of death and resurrection in the myth of the Dioscuri. Thus Sol and Luna are gods of Genesis and Apogenesis, or of Perceptivity and Growth.[31]

---

[27] Cumont, *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 264, n. 85.

[28] Dietrich, *Mithraslit*, p. 67ff.

[29] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 146; a mistaken argument, refuted by Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 291. Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 446, sought to identify the Sol of the Danubian plaques with Baal-Hammon of Syria, a deity worshipped also in Dacia.

[30] On the inaccurate drawing of an engraved gem (127, A, b) we must also restore the radiate nimbus worn by the two Riders in place of the crown represented in a modern manner.

[31] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 345ff.

## 2. *The stars*

As denizens, both artistically and symbolically, of the celestial zone, the stars on the Danubian plaques have their place reserved for them in most cases close to Sol-Luna and the Riders' heads. We note the fact that the stars are more frequent on the lead pieces than on the stone ones. Stone was more difficult to carve, and stars are reproduced there in the form of small crosses (64, a; 71, a; 79) or sometimes in an array of dots (153, a; 173). There seems to be no rule about the number of rays a star can have: six (37, b; 113, a; 174, a; 194, A; 197); seven (48, b; 72, c; 191, A); or eight (132, b; 140, a; 187; 189; 193; 197). Nor is there any rule about the number of stars (making them three or seven, for instance), so that we can draw no conclusions about their connection with particular astrological beliefs. There are pieces with three stars (57, 64); but also with four stars surrounding the fish in the pediment (125, a; 126, a; 137,a; 162,a; etc.); with five, scattered around the Riders (71,a; 190); with six, likewise scattered, this time in the upper registers (228); and even with 13 stars (194, A). One curious thing—none of the stone reliefs found in Dacia and Pannonia bears a star!

On the single-Rider monuments stars figure in only two cases, both from Moesia (64, a; 79). It looks as if these two Moesian monuments had been subsequently "christianized". The stars in question (three in one case and two in the other) are in the form of a cross. It is an attested fact that in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia the Thracian Rider was confused in the countryside with St. George killing the dragon, which is why such monuments were deposited as icons in Christian churches, after having been thus engraved with crosses.[32] It seems that this must have been the fate of the two Danubian Rider reliefs under discussion, for on none of the other pieces of this class, whether in stone or metal, do we find any stars. One definite example of a Class A monument engraved with stars is the fine bronze found in Italy (174, a). There the two stars, each with six rays, are placed close to the busts of Sol and Luna, above the serpents symbolizing the vault of heaven.

---

[32] Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 22 and Tudor *ED* VII, p. 250, n. 4. See also: Kazarow, *BSAB* II (1911), p. 55, fig. 5 and *Germania*, 1935, p. 316 and Dölger, *Antike und Christ.* V, 1 (1933), p. 62ff., pl. I. On the reverse of a lead roundel, lost today (48), there is a large sign in the form of an X. In Seure's opinion it is either a magical sign or a modern *graffito*. The star on a terracotta relief (77) is also dubious.

Among the Danubian monuments with two Riders, the stars vary in number from two to thirteen on each. On the stone reliefs, in view of the difficulty of reproducing a true star shape, the star is reduced to two crossed lines, a St. Andrew's cross. We must not forget, either, that on quite a number of stone monuments, the stars were painted and the paint has disappeared in course of time by weathering (153, a). When the number of stars exceeds three, they are dispersed over the whole surface of the piece (150, 153, 173, 194, A; 228). The arrangement of stars on Class B monuments is so varied that their position has nothing to tell us in respect of any precise religious interpretation. In most cases there is a star near the head of each Rider, with the result that the Goddess's head is flanked by the two (37, b; 41, b; 57, b; 72, c; 75, b; 127, c; 132, b; 133, b; 135, b; 140, b; 189, a; 192, b; 193, A, b; 197, a; 199, b; 205, c; 228, b). The two stars in these positions no doubt indicate the evening and morning stars. These great stars are likewise symbolized by the two between the two serpents on the reverse of an engraved gem (193, B). When there is a sprinkling of several stars around the two Riders' heads then these two great stars are symbolized by those nearest to each head (150; 173, a; 228).

On certain lead roundels the two stars are placed high up, between the heads of the two serpents whose bodies describe a ring. In this case they are the two great stars imagined on the vault of heaven (120; perhaps also 57, a), itself symbolized by the reptiles' bodies. In the fields reserved for the vault of heaven, these stars also figure together with characteristic celestial elements: two stars close to Sol-Luna and the eagle (191, A); two close to the eagle (83, a); two close to Sol-Luna and the vase flanked by serpents (113, a); and two close to the triad of busts (153, a). In each of these cases the fact that the stars are reproduced in pairs suggests an allusion to the two great stars, of Morning and Evening. They must on the other hand symbolize the vault of heaven when they are figured in groups of four (228) or five (190, a) in the neighbourhood of Sol-Luna and the eagle. In a single case, the placing of a star on Sol's head must no doubt be connected with some astrological belief (135, a).

There are also three cases (42, a; 48, a; 187) where the star, figured as a radiate disc "balancing the crescent moon", must represent Sol, balancing Luna who is represented as a crescent instead of in bust. The "star in crescent" theme itself appears only once, on an engraved gem, accompanied by the lion and an indecipherable inscription (191, B). This theme is connected with the Orient and has a long history behind it in the Hittite, Babylonian, Assyrian, Sassanid, and Iranian worlds. Campbell has given us valuable particulars.[33] The heavenly bodies thus symbolized were seen as the powerful influence of cosmic fatalism guiding the destinies of men.

When the number of stars exceeds two it may well be that we have to do with speculations of a magical kind.[34] It is the usual case with the engraved gems, which played a big part in magic and secret rituals.

Buday[35] has sufficiently emphasized the significance of the two stars near the heads of the Riders as emblems of the Dioscuri. They were indeed *Hesperos* and *Phosphoros*, rising respectively in the evening and the morning, and thus picturing the cycle of birth and death. In this hypostasis they were first identified by Lenormant[36] on the Berlin bronze (174, a). The fact that these two great stars were often positioned near the heads, that is behind the Riders, may also mean, as in the iconography of the Dioscuri, the alternate death and resurrection of the two Danubian Riders. This would be further evidence of the links between the cults of these two pairs of equestrian deities.

Pliny the Elder[37] has described the marked predilection of Thracian peoples for magical practices, astrological speculations, and astronomy. This addiction was to persist under Roman rule. Under the influence of Oriental astrology, the stars as symbols must have played an important part even in Danubian monuments of a funerary kind.[38] As in many other parts of the Roman world, astrology and magical practices played a great part in the religion of Roman soldiers of the 2nd-3rd centuries.[39] These beliefs, both numerous and complicated, must have found in the naive thinking of the faithful votaries of the Danubian Riders a practical and eschatological explanation. Higher interpretations, particularly in the sense of astronomy, could only have resulted from the more enlightened thinking of the priests acquainted with Chaldaean and Mazdaist doctrines.

---

[33] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 93f.

[34] Seure, *RÉA*, 1924, p. 326ff.

[35] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 122.

[36] Lenormant, *RA*, 1875, p. 50.

[37] Plinius, *Nat. hist.* XXX, 1.

[38] A. Schober, *Die römischen Grabsteine von Noricum und Pannonien*, Wien, 1923, p. 219.

As I said, in the Danubian Rider cult these magico-astrological preoccupations can only have taken an extremely naive form, being adopted for the most part from the Mithras religion. The priests of the Iranian god, better versed in this domain, manipulated these "speculative beliefs", founded on the cult of the seven planets and the symbolism of the number 7.[40] But it must be noted that so far as the Danubian plaques are concerned the number 7 is replaced by the number 3, which has not the same magical and astrological importance. It may be, then, that quite a number of these magico-astrological beliefs entered the Danubian Rider cult through the mediation of other oriental religions (that of Cybele among them) for which the number 3 was important. An example of direct Mithraic influence is offered by an engraved gem (194). This has near the images of Hecate and Nemesis (protective deities universally known for occult practices) several magical emblems of Mazdaism, a cryptographic inscription, *seven* stars (the seven planets), *seven* craters, and *seven* other vases—all in the lower part of the field.

The magico-astrological speculations, with their tenuous religious interpretations which seem so naive today, were introduced into the Danubian provinces of the Empire at the same time as the great wave of oriental cults which submerged them. There they found fertile ground and established themselves among the native Thraco-Getan populations as well as among the Roman colonists and soldiers, exposed as they all were to the great dangers of life on the Danubian frontier. Little by little these mystery-seeking tendencies were polarized by the Mithraic theology, arrived from the East with the knowledge of the sky inherited from the Chaldeans and a whole procession of magi learned in this field of speculation. All the other cults with some kinship of belief were thus able to borrow magical and astrological practices from the Mithraic religion, organized as it was to impart them. This was the case, too, with the Danubian Rider cult and its Class B monuments, especially the lead pieces and engraved gems, under the powerful influence of Mithraism in the third century.

---

[39] F. Boll, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung*, Berlin 1926, p. 26. The stars and planetary symbols are frequent also on the monuments of Jupiter Dolichenus, cf. Merlat, *Rép. JupDol.*, nos. 63, 64, 134, 142, 287, 314 etc.

[40] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 112f.; *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 120ff.; *Relig. Orient.*, pp. 161 et 265, n. 1; Roscher, *Lex.*, III, 2, col. 531; Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, p. 179ff.; Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 91ff.

### 3. *The Heavenly Triad and the Divine Banquet*

On the Class A reliefs the heavenly triad appears only in a quite exceptional way, since these monuments have no more than two principal divinities. In this earliest group of Danubian plaques, with a single Rider, there is in fact only one case where the triad is seen on the pediment of the design, between the busts of Sol and Luna (200, a). This monument, brought to light at Tibiscum, informs us that in its oldest phase the religion already possessed the cult of a triad, although the principal picture contains the images of only two great gods. Of course, the second male element in this triad can only be the future second Rider, who was to appear also in the principal field of the Class B reliefs.

On the Class C reliefs, the triad occupies the whole field, in the celebrated scene of the divine banquet, while on the Class B reliefs the triad is shown in the form of busts placed in the upper registers reserved for the celestial regions (20 examples). It is present, assuming different aspects, in all the provinces where Danubian plaques have been found in any quantity. In most cases the busts are perfunctorily treated, without specific attributes. But their presence in the first register of these monuments reveals the solar character of the Danubian Riders associated with the Goddess.

Unpretentiously carved, the triad of busts of the Danubian divinities is in some cases (12; 28, a; 66, a; 88, a; 92; 204, a) flanked by Sol and Luna. Once, the sun and moon deities are replaced by two painted stars (153, a). The stars too denote the vault of heaven. In three other cases Sol and Luna are each replaced by a serpent, likewise symbolizing the arch of the sky (41, b; 147, a), or are simply absent (104, a). In one case only, the triad is flanked both by the two sky deities and by two serpents (149, a). In two cases also the Goddess is absent from the triad group. In one, on a fragmentary Dacian relief, her bust is replaced by a crater with the two serpents but flanked with the characteristic busts of the two Riders, bearded and with Phrygian caps. In the corners of the upper register there are the busts of Sol and Luna (11, A). The other case is that of a fine lead plaque from Romula (37, a) on which the artist has replaced the Goddess by an eagle. The bird is flanked by the busts of the two Riders and turned towards each of them is an attendant bearing a slender vase. Once again Sol and Luna watch from the far sides of the register. The scene must undoubtedly allude to the divine banquet, with the three divinities as guests and the Goddess represented by the eagle.[41]

The same meaning must be attributed to the scene reproduced on a fragmentary relief from Tibiscum (22, a) where an attendant can still be seen behind the bust of Sol carrying a fish towards the first bust of the triad. Even when there are no attendants serving the gods with heavenly food and drink, it is always the celestial banquet which must be thought of every time we see the eagle in the neighbourhood of the triad and the sun and moon deities (99, a). A more recent form of this banquet is seen on a marble plaque found at Singidunum (50, a), where the triad is accompanied by two attendants bearing fish, and Sol and Luna. In a single case, the celestial triad's only company is Nemesis (198, a).

But there are three plaques in which the upper registers give a still clearer account of the celestial banquet, given no doubt to the Danubian deities by Sol and Luna. In two of these we see the Goddess and the two Riders with their beards and big caps served with fish by two attendants, in the presence of Sol and Luna. Above the Goddess's head there is the eagle with its wings fully spread (182, a;

---

[41] In Dolichenian sculpture also the eagle is placed in the cosmic triad, cf. Merlat, *Rép. JupDol.*, pp. 25, 65, 121, 132, 135, 146 etc. et *JupDol.*, p. 40ff.

191, a). But it is a marble roundel found at Apulum (3, a) which gives us the most complete picture of this banquet. As usual, the sun and moon deities watch from the extremities of the upper register. In the centre is the Goddess, above her an eagle on the point of taking wing, and on either side of her the busts of the two Riders, bearded and with the same impressive caps. From the right comes an attendant bearing in his arms a big fish. On the left, two attendants are placing on a three-legged *mensa* another fish for the banquet of the gods. On a relief of unknown provenance, the form of which has been preserved only in a drawing, one of the attendants bears a sceptre, while his companion brings the fish (184, a).

An altogether unusual aspect of the triad is that presented by the Terracina relief (176, a). The bust of the Goddess with the crescent moon at her shoulders and the two Riders with radiate crowns are evidence of the syncretism of the triad with Sol and Luna.

The costumes, symbols, and attributes accompanying them, together with other bodily details, leave no doubt that the busts of the triad are to be identified with the three Danubian divinities of the central picture. I made this identification as early as 1937,[42] at a time when it had not yet occurred to other investigators of this cult, some thinking that it was an example of the Capitoline triad,[43] others supposing them to be *Matres*.[44]

It would have been quite natural for the Roman military world, not very well acquainted with the iconographic variants of this Danubian cult, to confuse its triad with that of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. But in our case this particular triad could hardly have had an Etrusco-Italic origin. On the Danube we are concerned with a very ancient Chaldean religious conception, which was brought to Europe by the great surge of Oriental religions which broke over the Balkans and Carpathians from Asia Minor.[45] The divine banquet held in the heavenly places on the Danubian plaques was inspired artistically and religiously by Mithraism.[46] On the Mithraic monuments, the Iranian god, after accomplishing his train of heroic exploits on earth, flies with Sol in the celestial chariot towards the heavenly places, where the Master of the world and the stars feasts him at a holy banquet. In the same way, the three Danubian deities, once their earthly tasks are done, depart for the celestial regions where their victories are celebrated in a banquet attended by Sol and Luna with the eagle and the raven.

---

[42] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 64ff.

[43] R. Schneider, *AEMÖ* XI (1887), p. 14 and Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 340..

[44] Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 15 and 17. Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 67, n. 4, does not agree. In support of his theory Ziehen cited the three busts of a marble relief from Lower Dacia (47, b). It must be noted that owing to the sculptor's ignorance or lack of space the divine triad of busts has been wrongly placed in the lower register. Without serious grounds Buday, *Dolg-Szeged*, 1928, p. 190, sought here to identify the Helen associated with the Cabiro-Dioscuri. Another serious mistake by the same author was the identification of a chthonic snake (48, a; 83, a) near to the Goddess, in the celestial regions.

This holy banquet of divinities in heaven (*apotheosis-consecratio*). was imitated by the initiates during the celebration of the mysteries. Thus we must not confuse the two types of banquet and those taking part in them (cf. above, p. 195f).

The mere presence of the three deities in the upper part of the plaques, without any iconographic allusion to the banquet, was intended solely to emphasize the solar aspect of the Danubian Riders. This has been brought out with real clarity only on the Class B monuments, where the division into three registers exactly delineates the three zones, celestial, terrestrial, and chthonic, of the universe over which the religious authority of the three deities was exercised.

The religious importance of the banquet is demonstrated by its representation in isolation on the Class C plaques, which unfortunately number only four pieces, limited in their geographical distribution solely to Scythia Minor (96, 98, 102, 103). On these four reliefs, executed in a stone common in Dobrudja, the triad is depicted by the busts of the Goddess in the centre and the two Riders on either side. As in some stone reliefs brought to light in Dacia and analysed above (3, a; 19, a; 22, a; 37, a), together with a monument from Viminacium (50, a)—found, that is to say, in the neighbourhood of Dacia—and another of unknown provenance (182, a), the Riders are portrayed on the four Dobrudja pieces with flowing hair and bushy beards and high conical caps, matching the thick clothing worn on their bodies. These ethnographic indicators are otherwise found uniquely in Dacia, on the Class A plaques, that is, on the most ancient representations of our cult (1, a; 15, b; 29, c; 183, b, and on the relief 174, b, of unknown provenance but perhaps also Dacian). These characteristics were to persist, but again uniquely on Dacian soil, when the single Rider became two (3, b; 4, b; 5, b; 6; 8; 11, a; 18, b; 20, a; 27, a; 47, a; 49). It consequently appears obvious that the stone-carvers who made these four monuments in Scythia Minor have simply copied the outward appearance of the men figuring in the albums of the Dacian craftsmen, with their thick clothing, long hair, and beards, and so on, since they too were working for a Geto-Dacian population which hardly differed from that dwelling on the other bank of the Danube.[47]

---

[45] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 207; *Relig. Orient.*, p. 262, n. 77; Rostovtseff, *REG*, 1919, p. 472 and *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 22ff.

[46] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 275ff. and Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 316ff. Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 60, proposes for the triad formed by the Godess flanked by Sol and Luna a learned cosmogonic explanation, based on Plato's philosophy. But such an exalted religious and philosophical interpretation was not within reach of the humble worshippers of the Danubian Riders.

In the two provinces the caps and clothing of these long-bearded, long-haired divinities were made not of some thick cloth but of sheepskin with their shaggy fleeces turned outwards. It is a specific feature of these populations, seized on by Ovid two centuries earlier, during his exile at Tomis. When we look at the image of these Danubian gods we have before our eyes a portrait of the Getae, *intonsi et hirsuti*, described by the poet[48] with icicles hanging from their beards and long hair in winter.[49] The Barbarians, writes Ovid, wear as a winter protection against the cold thick sheepskin clothing.[50] It strikes you with terror to see them, all hairy and covered with fleeces,[51] their faces hidden by shaggy manes which they never trim, sheltering from the rigours of winter in close-fitting trousers and heavy skin coats.[52] These details of hair and clothing in the Danubian divinities undoubtedly constitute a further proof of the Dacian origin of the Danubian Rider-Gods.

---

[47] Tudor, *Pontica* 5, p. 503ff.

[48] Ovidius, *Pont.*, I, 5, 74; III, 5, 6 and IV, 2, 2.

[49] Ovidius, *Trist.*, III, 10, 21-22 and V, 7, 180.

[50] *Ibid.*, III, 10, 19.

[51] *Ibid.*, V, 10, 32.

[52] *Ibid.*, V, 7, 49. V. Pârvan, *Getica*, p. 125 and 169, sees "long fur coats".

Returning now to the question of the divine banquet reproduced on the four Pontic monuments of Class C, we note that on two of them the sculptural representation of the banquet is reduced to that of three *monopodia* (102, 103), joined together and arranged one in front of each deity. No other detail of utensil or foods is indicated. On the two other reliefs, however, they are clear enough. On that from Corbul de Jos (98), in front of the Goddess's bust stands a pot with a wide opening, two side-handles, and a flat base. Before each of the Riders is a high-stemmed cup. We note that pottery of these shapes is very frequent among the Dacian peoples from the second Iron Age onward, long persisting under Roman rule. What was eaten at the divine banquet is clearly revealed by a fragmentary relief from Tomis (96), where the fish on a tripod before the Goddess and the ram's head in front of one Rider are both seen on the preserved part of the monument. Consequently, at the banquet served to the divine triad at the moment of its arrival in the celestial world, and also at the mystical love-feast of initiates, the principal food was fish and mutton, in other words the flesh of animals sanctified by the cult. One point which must be noted here is that the banquet served to the gods in heaven was known only in Dacia and Scythia Minor and figures only on the monuments from those two regions, while the mystical agapes were a characteristic feature of the Pannonian lead plaques.

## 4. *The Eagle*

The presence of the eagle on the Danubian plaques must also be interpreted by reference to Sol and Luna and the other religious elements of the celestial world. It is almost always reproduced on the upper register of the reliefs, where also Sol, Luna, the stars, the divine triad, the serpents, and so on are placed. The bird of heaven is represented in most cases with wings outspread, ready to take flight (3, a; 4, a; 18, a; 19, a; 34, a; 37, a; 48, b; 56, a; 72, b; 75, a; 81, a; 99, a; 106, a; 112, a; 182, a; 190, a; 191, A, a; 193, A, a; 228, a). On some examples he carries a small crown in his beak (83, a; 199, a) or in his talons (75, a). Altogether unusual, it seems to me, is the manner in which the eagle is represented on a marble relief from

Castelu (97). Here he is shown near the hooves of the right-hand Rider's horse, holding a ram's head in his talons and yet on the point of taking flight. This image no doubt reflected a notion about the manner in which the food for the divine banquet was transported to heaven.

The lack of skill of native craftsmen often led to confusion between the silhouettes of the eagle, the cock, and the raven—the two latter also figured in the celestial regions (12, a; 57, a; 73, b; 77).

To return to the eagle, two facts are important to notice. First, it never figures on the Class A plaques, those with one Rider which are also the earliest. This shows that the adoption of this cultic element must have taken place later, after the development of Class B. It must have resulted from an intimate contact between the Danubian Rider religion and some artistically and religiously related cult. Secondly, the eagle is completely absent from the numerous Danubian monuments brought to light in Pannonia. It is on the other hand extremely frequent on the reliefs from Dacia. From the Class C pieces its absence is easily explained, since on the four plaques representing this class the only scene depicted is that of the banquet served to the three deities.

The eagle appears on the monuments of quite a number of other cults, such as those of Mithras or Jupiter Dolichenus, and also on military monuments, and so on. Its role in the Mithraic repertoire has been discussed at length. Cumont[53] interpreted it as a messenger of Sol, the function it performed in Mithraic cult. It appears that the eagle's mission as a symbol of Helios-Sol was to conduct souls to the celestial regions.[54] The Romans considered it as a bird inhabiting the heavens with Jupiter, since among all winged creatures only the eagles could climb so high in the sky.[55] In the same way the eagle's role can be interpreted on the Danubian plaques. It would thus be a messenger of the sun and moon deities and the celestial triad, near to which it is almost always reproduced. In eschatological belief it then figures as the carrier of souls to heaven. It was also a symbol very familiar to soldiers, since the eagle was reproduced on their standards as an emblem of victory and of their fighting enthusiasm. For the same reason the sculptors of the Danubian reliefs added to it the small crown of victory, carried in its beak or talons as a symbol of the victory of the two Riders. The varied range of attributes given to the eagle (Sol's messenger, emblem of victory, conductor of souls, etc.) together with its late entry into the sculpture of the Danubian cult, are certain evidence that it was borrowed from the Mithraic reliefs.

---

[53] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 194. On the Mithraic reliefs he often bears the whip in his talons, a theme unknown on the Danubian plaques. Cf. also Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, pl. 2; *Syria* VIII (1927), p. 163, pl. XXXVIII and Dieterich, *Mithraslit*, p. 54. Dieterich, *Bonner Jahrb.*, 1909, p. 112, supposes that the eagle was also an important degree of initiation in the mysteries of the Danubian Riders, because in the Orient the *Patres* were identified with οἱ αἴετοι (an opinion shared also by Boll, *ARW* XIX (1909/1910), p. 552).

[54] Herodianus (IV, 2) informs us of a ceremony of *consecratio*, when an eagle took flight over the flames consuming the corpse of a dead emperor. According to Roman funerary beliefs, it was the eagle who in his flight carried the dead man's soul to heaven (See also: Dussaud, *Notes de mythol.*

Once adopted from Mithraism, of course, the eagle would have brought with it other beliefs and interpretations, with which it enriched the Danubian Rider cult. These beliefs and interpretations peculiar to Mithraism have been analysed by Campbell[56] and Ochsenschlager.[57] But the question remains difficult to answer in the case of the repertoire of the two Riders because of the unpretentiousness of the sculptures. In the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus the

---

*syrienne*, p. 15; Cumont, *RHR* LXII (1910), p. 142 (= *Étud. syriennes*, 1917, p. 56) and S. Reinach, *RA*, 1907, p. 66. An important place was taken by the eagle in the repertoire of Dolichenian monuments. In this religion, it was an element of a cosmic triad and a celestial symbol; cf. Merlat, *Rép. JupDol.*, pp. 25, 58, 62, 67, 105, 120, 132, 134, etc.

[55] *Anthol. Palat.*, IX, 222. For the other attributes cf. Otto Keller, *Thiere d. Klass. Altertums*, Innsbruck, 1887, p. 236ff.; Cumont, *Etud. syrien.*, *loc. cit.*, and Oder, *PWRE* I, 1, col. 373ff.

[56] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, pp. 22, 38, 41, 288, 328 etc. "In the Mithraic iconography the eagle is the bird of the sky dome, and of lighting bolts as in the myths of Zeus" (*Ibid.*, p. 218). On the solar character of the eagle cf. Cumont, *RHR*, 1910, p. 119ff.; Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 258, and Roes, *Syria* 27 (1950), p. 221ff.; For his character as a celestial messenger see: Seyrig, *Syria* 26, (1949), p. 232ff., and Konrad Schauenburg, *Helios. Archäologisch-mythologische Studien über den antiken Sonnengott*, Berlin 1955, p. 23.

[57] Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 61: "The eagle, usually assigned to Jupiter as emblematic of his kingly power of fertility stands here behind Luna and is probably represented as symbolic of the drive, energy, force, and stuff of growth".

eagle also had a complex of meanings, and there symbolized the qualities of the deity himself. This preeminently sacred bird formed with Sol and Luna a celestial and cosmic triad, possessed of a wide symbolism common to the regions of the Orient.[58] It therefore retained the same complex of meanings in its adoption by the Danubian plaques.

### 5. *The Raven*

The place of the raven in the Danubian reliefs was more humble than those of the cock or the eagle, indicating that it did not rank so highly there as in the Mithraic mythology. It is seen only once on the Class A monuments (one Rider), being reproduced in a lower register of the Berlin bronze plaque (174, b). Even on the Class B plaques (two Riders), the raven can be identified with certainty only in ten cases (37, b; 41, a; 42, d; 75, a; 120, b; 126, c; 193, A, a; 197; 199, a). In two other cases (181, 190) its presence can be presumed.

By contrast with the eagle, whose place is always in the upper register, that of the raven is by no means fixed. It can be recognised in the registers of each of the three worlds—celestial, terrestrial, and chthonic. This variability evidently reflects the multiple role of this bird depending on the context in which it is placed. It may appear in the world of Sol and Luna (41, a; 75, a; 193, A, a); above the head of one of the Riders (37, b) in the central scene; near the enemies trampled by their mounts in the same scene (120, b; 126, c); in the bottom register, among other animals (42, d; 199, c); or perched on an arch in the lower part of the field (197, b).

It seems that this bird only had a minor part to play on the earliest Danubian monuments. But its function was enriched by artistic and cultic contacts with Mithraism and at the same time diversified so as to be manifest on the three levels of operation of the Danubian deities. When it is placed in the upper part of the relief, the raven can be interpreted, as on the Mithraic monuments, as a messenger of Sol. He took part in all the Iranian god's exploits.

---

[58] Merlat, *JupDol.*, p. 40ff.

When present at the sacred banquet he was also an emblem of the constellation which bears his name, and finally he gave his name, *Corvus* (*Korax*), also to a rank among the initiates of Mazdaism.[59] Thus in the upper part of the Danubian plaques he performed the allegoric function spoken of by Theophrastus,[60] calling to announce the arrival of rain, the beneficent "water of heaven" which assuages earth's thirst. The same sky messenger chased away the demons of drought and took flight at dawn to announce the sunrise.[61]

It can thus be concluded that the functions of the raven in the Danubian Rider cult must in general have been the same as in the Mithraic religion. And it was this religion which influenced our cult at a certain moment in its second stage of development.

### 6. *The Peacock*

The peacock can be certainly identified on two lead plaques from Romula and Oescus, cast in the same mould and in the same workshop (35, a and 72, a). The busts of Sol and Luna arranged in the angular pediment of the two plaques are flanked by two peacocks shown in profile. Further, on the lead roundel brought to light at Orlea, that is, in the neighbourhood of Oescus (44, b), it seems that we also have two peacocks confronted under the radiate disc of the sun.

This bird does not figure in the Mithraic repertoire, nor incidentally in any other cult contemporary with that of the Danubian Riders and with which they could have come in contact. Thus we cannot say how they found their way into the repertoire of the Danubian plaques. It is true that among the Romans the peacock was Juno's favourite bird, but this can hardly be an explanation of its presence in our case. What we can recall among the customs of the period is that when there was a *consecratio* on the occasion of the deification of an empress (illustrated on coins and statuary) the eagle was often replaced by a peacock, who carried the soul of the dead empress to heaven.[62] Thus, just as with the eagle, the peacock's presence in the celestial zone beside Sol and Luna can be explained as having a psychopompic function. It conducted to heaven the souls of dead female worshippers of the Danubian deities.

---

[59] Cumont, *MMM* I, pp. 189, 192, 305, 315 etc. and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 22ff., gives a good iconographic and religious interpretation of the raven (cf. index, p. 425). In Mazdaism κόραξ was the messenger (κῆρυξ) of the Iranian god, cf. Vermaseren, *Mithra*, p. 59.

[60] Theophrastus, *De sign. tempest.*, 16, J. Wünsch, *ARW* XX (1911), p. 318; Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 291; Tudor, *ED* VIII, p. 447.

[61] Campbell, *loc. cit.* et Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 64.

We must note, however, that this artistic theme had a very restricted area of diffusion, limited to the banks of the Danube in the immediate neighbourhood of the two places named above. Perhaps it was introduced into the repertoire of the Danubian plaques by the fancy of some *plumbarius* working probably in a Sucidava workshop, in a locality famous for its lead-working.

### 7. *The Winds*

The allegory of the winds is attested for certain on the Danubian plaques by the lead relief from Romula (34, a). On this, in the two top corners we see two human busts (the right-hand one of which, better preserved, is bearded) blowing into two tubes in the form of truncated cones. It must be supposed that two other identical images were placed at the bottom corners of the plaque (in defaced condition today). At the same time we must not forget that the number of winds or seasons was not always constant even on the Mithraic monuments.[63] We sometimes see only two or three busts figured there instead of four.

---

[62] Steier, *PWRE* XIX, col. 1420 et Tudor, *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961) p. 333. The peacock is present as a decorative element on the funerary stelae of Dacia, where it symbolizes the immortality of the soul; cf. Gr. Florescu, *I monumenti funerari romani della Dacia inferiore*, Bucharest 1942, p. 62.

[63] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 96. On the Mithraic bas-reliefs, the Winds have wings on their heads, cf. Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 1083, 1283, 1292, 1388, etc. The trumpet used by the Winds to produce the movement of the air is mentioned by Arnobius (cf. Cumont, *loc. cit.*). Surrounding *Mithras petrogenes* represented on a monument from the Albachtal, by Treves, we see only the four young heads symbolizing the winds, cf. S. Loeschke, *Die Erforschung des Tempelbezirks im Albachtale zu Trier*, Berlin 1928, p. 16ff. The Winds were also represented with their hair in disorder and puffed-out cheeks, allegories to be seen on *l'Arco de San Lazaro*, cf. Pollak, *Bull. Com. Arch. Comm.-Roma* LXI (1933), p. 131, fig. 1-2. For the cult of the Winds, see: Cumont, *loc. cit.*; *Myst. Mithr.*, p. 117; Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, p. 54ff.; Lantier, *DSDict. Ant.* V, p. 715; and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 162ff.

As this allegory of the winds figures in the Mithraic repertoire, Cumont attributed this example to sculptural work by Mazdaist craftsmen. It was the image of the great winds *Favonius*, *Auster*, *Eurus*, and *Aquilo*, blowing from the four points of the compass, and hence placed at the four corners. The cult of the winds in the Danubian regions can be explained by the fact that it was they which assured the humidity needed by the earth during summer, or alternatively brought drought and the great cold of winter. Their presence only on one plaque from Romula is always to be explained by the local artistic and religious influence of the Mithras cult.[64]

## 8. *The Seasons*

It seems likely that the four Seasons are allegorically reproduced on two lead plaques in the shape of *aedicula* found at Sirmium, one of them in five copies (125, a) and the other, a variant of it, preserved in a single example (126, a). They have an inner circular medallion inscribed in a square outer frame, and in the triangular corners made by the two border-lines are the busts of four personages in profile. So far as can be determined these are variously young or bearded or have small crowns on their heads. The rudimentary nature of these figures, aggravated by their bad state of preservation, makes it hard to be sure of any detailed characteristics. But in any event the small crowns encircling the foreheads of some make it certain that they were not Winds, who would have winged foreheads and hair in disorder. Among the Seasons, Winter was represented by an old man with a beard.[65]

Within the framework of the Danubian Rider cult the Seasons, however, played only a minimal part and it can scarcely be thought that they would have been familiar to any workshops but those of Sirmium. On a rather limited scale they were worshipped also in the

---

[64] For the manifold religious functions attributed to the Winds in Mithraic cult see Campbell's account, *loc. cit.*

[65] *AEMÖ* XVIII (1895), p. 184, and Cumont, *MMM* II, 228 bis. Information from Ovid, *Metam.*, II, 27ff. and XV, 206ff. The crown worn on the heads of the Seasons is also a frequent allegory on Mithraic monuments; see Cumont, *op. cit.* I, p. 93, and Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 1083, 1137, 1685, 1727, etc.

Mithraic religion, which gave them a more learned interpretation, based on astronomy and cosmogony.[66]

As in the case of the Winds, we may conclude that this was a local initiative, peculiar to the workshops of Sirmium, which did not become generalized even in Pannonia, where also there is no evidence of the introduction of an allegory representing the Seasons on the Danubian plaques.

---

[66] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 92ff., and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 162ff.

# PART FIVE

## INTERPRETATION OF THE MYSTIC SYMBOLS

We come now to some of the thorniest problems of our whole subject. The nature and use of mystic symbols in the Danubian Rider Religion have puzzled many scholars. In its richness and variety, the range of symbols in the different scenes represented on the plaques gives them a quite exceptional cultural value, greater than that of either the Mithras or the Jupiter Dolichenus cults. The absence of literary sources, of dedicatory inscriptions, temples, topographic or archaeological data, or the like, forces us to attempt the interpretation of the symbols solely from the sculptural details of the monuments. These are often obscure or in a precarious state of preservation. Often we shall be thrown back on analogies from the images peculiar to other cults which may have influenced the Danubian plaques artistically or theologically. Such a procedure can be effective only within certain limits, as Fernand Chapouthier has so justly observed.[1] We must always bear in mind that the cult was a local one, using symbols peculiar to itself, and interpreting them in a naive and limited fashion, at least to begin with, within the naive and limited horizons of the Geto-Dacian native population. Some of these symbols, however, found on the earliest Danubian monuments, are common to quite a number of religions (the fish, the ram, the serpent, the cock, etc.). This circumstance has induced some scholars to confine their treatment to methods of analogy and nothing more, denying the sculptures all religious or artistic originality. There can be no shadow of doubt that such a procedure is altogether mistaken. Not that I propose to deny the influence of other related cults on the Danubian Riders. That too is indisputable and was felt in the series of mystic symbols associated with them. A consequence was that they adopted mystical and iconographical elements until then foreign to their repertoire, but with which they were quite conversant owing to their theological content and its kinship with oriental religions already familiar to them.

---

[1] Chapouthier, *RÉA* XLI (1939), p. 67 and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 57ff.

As the Danubian Rider cult became enriched with these assimilations its solar and chthonic content became more complex, making our task of interpretation still more difficult and reducing our chances of establishing with precision what was original to them and what was borrowed. We must remember that this was a period of great religious confusion caused by syncretism. Despite all this, there are many puzzling aspects of the cult which can only be explained by a meticulous examination of their mystic symbolism.

"Symbols are to the translation of the hidden mystic idea what the philosophical decipherment of ancient texts is to scriptural religions. The former is the key to philosophic abstraction, the latter to idiomatic limitation." Thus wrote Ochsenschlager.[2]

These symbols were addressed primarily to initiates of limited education, who learned them like schoolchildren learning their lessons, by the practice of the esoteric cult. The sculptural images were aimed at making accessible to them, even though in a naive form, certain philosophic abstractions about cosmogony, the *principia* of the cosmos and so on. The purpose of initiation was precisely that of revealing these mysterious truths. The importance of the symbolism of religious iconography was already emphasized by ancient authors (Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, and the rest).[3]

### I. *The Fish*

The fish, I have already said (cf. p. 102ff), is the most frequent and most important of all the symbols. It is directly connected with the cult of the Goddess, as in the mystical practices of other religions. It appears in such a context on numerous monuments, and in the most varied hypostases of the iconographic repertoire. It is found in all three classes of Danubian monuments.

---

[2] Ochsenschlager, *loc. cit.* He emphasizes the method and importance of the study of symbols by means of literary and iconographic analogies.

[3] The analysis of sources by Ochsenschlager, *op. cit.*, p. 58, n. 40-42.

In the majority of cases (about 70), the fish figures in the central scene, resting on the table in front of the Goddess, from left to right, or from right to left (2; 3, b; 4, b; 5; 6; 12; 18, b; 20, a; 21; 22, b; 23, a; 25, a; 27, a; 28, a; 31, a; 32, a; 37, b; 39; 47, b; 48, b; 50, b; 58, a; 59, a; 62, a; 63, a; 65, a; 66, b;; 75, b; 76, a; 77; 78, a; 79; 80, a; 82, a; 83, b; 85, a; 86, a; 87; 90; 94; 96; 97; 99, b; 101; 104, b; 105, b; 118, a; 119, a; 122, a; 140; 147, b; 148, a; 153, b; 154, a; 155, a; 160, a; 161, a; 175, a; 176, a; 177, a; 178, a; 181, a; 182, b; 184, a; 198, b; 199, b; 200, a). We note that in one case the fish had a coloured glass eye (22, b), while in another the table with the fish is again reproduced in the lower register (177, b). There are also cases where the fish symbol reappears in other situations, besides the one reposing on the table (31; 72; 88; 177). Often, for lack of space, the table supporting the fish has been placed in the following register, usually aligned with the Goddess (about 28 cases: 1, c; 7, b; 9, c; 14, b; 16, c; 34, d; 41, c; 42, c; 56, c; 64, b; 71, b; 72, d; 75, c; 81, b; 88, b; 106, c; 113, c; 127, d; 132, e; 133, e; 135, d; 146, c; 174, b; 177, b; 183, c; 190, c; 194, A, c; 204, c; 228, c). In the Class A monuments, the displacement of the table to the following register is a natural consequence of the Goddess stretching out her arms in welcome to the Rider. In only one case the fish reposes on an altar (86, b)—unless it may be that the altar in question is in fact a *mensa* of *monopodium* type.

The fish was a food eaten at the divine banquet served at the altar to the divine triad in the celestial regions. There it is either placed on the table or borne by attendants (3, a; 19, a; 22, a; 50, a; 182, a). It is also one of the sacred foods served to initiates on a round table at the mystical banquet (127, d; 132, d; 133, d; 135, c). In certain cases it can be identified as a dolphin (14; 34, d; 72, d; 152; 181, a). In its dolphin aspect it is a companion at arms of one of the Riders, placed near the hooves of his mount (127, c; 132, c; 133, c; 135, b—cf. above, p. 118ff). The importance of the fish in this cult sometimes also secures it a place on the pediment of the plaques (125, a; 126, a; 137, a) or close to the Goddess's head (45, b; 46).

The recent discoveries at Tibiscum show us the fish in a hitherto unknown situation. For the first time it appears on the Class A plaques in a scene of cult or sacrifice. A seated person holds out an oblong object towards a tripod bearing the ram's head (9, c; 16, c; 29, d; 201, b; 202, C, b; 203, c). On one of these pieces (201, b), the silhouette of a fish (dolphin) can be clearly distinguished, leaving no doubt of its nature. The oblong object manipulated by the seated person (usually on a slab of rock) and the fish's body hanging by its extremity reveal a fisherman with rod and line (cf. below, p. 234ff).

All the same, there are quite a number, too, of cases where the fish has no clearly defined place capable of a religious interpretation (40; 72, d; 114, b; 120, b; 155, c; 156, c; 162, a; 171, a; 173, b; 190, c; 191, A, c; 195, b). A mere fifteen intact or scarcely damaged monuments have no trace of a fish (98, 102, 103, 187, 188, 189, 197, 200 etc.). In certain cases it appears several times on the same monument (72, 132, 133, 135).

The preceding statistics show that, like the ram for the Riders, the fish constituted one of the principle symbols of the Goddess. It was what prompted the advocates of the identification of the Danubian Riders with the Cabiri to identify the fish of our plaques with the πόμπιλος, specific to the divinities of Samothrace,[4] as Aelianus tells us.[5] Dölger assigns an oriental origin to the fish on the Danubian plaques.[6] Rostovtseff,[7] true to his "Iranizing" theory about the Danubian Riders, thinks the fish associated with them also came from southern Russia where it frequently accompanied the cult of a Great Goddess. As an aquatic creature the fish of the Danubian plaques according to Campbell[8] must symbolize an important attribute of the goddess Aphrodite-Astarte-Anahita, the illustrious divinity of the *Aqua Vitae* syncretized with Dea Syria. Proceeding to an analysis of the Danubian plaque from Pannonia, manufactured in lead in the third century, that is at the period of maximum development of the cult, Ochsenschlager[9] seeks to explain the role of the fish with reference to religious practices peculiar to *Dea Syria.* In his view, the Syrian symbolism of the fish was introduced into Pannonia by the numerous Graeco-Oriental colonists, especially those established in the environs of Sirmium. The Syrian cult of the fish is attested above all at Heliopolis. Details are given in the pleasant erotic legend concerning the syncretistic deity Derceto-Aphrodite-Astarte-Atargatis by the rhetorician Lucian of Samosate (*De Dea Syria,* passim), which concerns the construction of the temple dedicated to her in this great Syrian religious centre.[10] But we must remember that the religious ceremonies performed around this ancient sanctuary concerned the worship of springs, waters, and the fish, with rituals which are in no way reflected on the Danubian plaques. The mere observation that these rituals tended to illustrate "the germinative power of the earth waters" and that the fish represented "the symbol of regeneration and resurrection" is hardly a sufficient argument in favour of any close association of the Danubian Goddess with the feminine deities of Heliopolis, as indeed Ochsenschlager himself recognizes.[11]

---

[4] Nowotny, Buday, etc. cf. above, p. 27ff.

[5] Aelianus, *De nat. anim.*, XV, 23.

[6] Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 120. A sacral element in Syria (especially for Atargatis); symbol of life in Babylon, but in the Aegean region sacrificed to the underworld (*ibid.*, pp. 420 and 429); cf. aussi Spiegelberg, *ARW* XII (1909), p. 574ff.

[7] Rostovtseff, *RÉG*, 1919, p. 462; id., in *Opuscula arch. O. Montelio dicata*, 1913 and *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 20.

[8] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 331ff.

The fish as an object of cult and religious rites was frequent among quite a number of ancient peoples of the Near East and the whole of Europe, before it made its entry also into Christianity.[12] We can thus undoubtedly accept the idea of contacts and mutual influences between the fish cults of various religions, including that of the Danubian Riders, especially during the high tide of syncretism. That does not mean that the fish was in any way transposed to the Danubian plaques from another cult, having been unknown to the Rider religion until a given moment. In fact this cult of the fish in close liaison with the Goddess can only have been of local origin and development, like the Goddess herself. Only thus can its presence be explained on the earliest monuments—those of Class A from Dacia (2, 40, 45, 46)—created at a time when syncretism had not yet become so powerful.

---

[9] Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 61ff.

[10] The mythological literature is to be found in Ochsenschlager, *loc. cit.*, and the notes 64-66.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 62: "it cannot be affirmed that it initiated the symbolic use of the fish in the Danubian Horsemen religion or was the only source of influence on the symbolism of our plaques".

[12] La bibliographie, in Ochsenschlager, *op. cit.*, p. 62 et n. 71-74.

But when the colonists arriving from elsewhere in the Danubian provinces brought with them new cults, more attractive, with more spectacular rites connected with the religious function of the fish, the Danubian Rider religion was no doubt contaminated by them. The symbolic functions attributed to the fish by the first worshippers of the cult in Dacia were no doubt unpretentious, in keeping with their intellectual and religious background. For them the fish was no more than a sacred food offered to the Goddess and consumed during their religious love-feasts in memory of the Assumption banquet of the gods. It was only during the phase of greatest prosperity of the mysteries of the cult, as reflected on the Danubian plaques, that higher beliefs of a mystical and symbolic character came to enrich the symbolism of the fish. Then it was that the fish was regarded as "a symbol of the substance of life, implying generation or regeneration...guardian and guide intimately involved in genesis and apogenesis", and so on.[13]

The triple religious aspect assumed in course of time by the Goddess and the two Riders is in perfect accord with the new attributes conferred on the fish in the syncretistic period. It was a natural consequence of the fact that the beliefs and superstitions, like the various ritual practices, connected with the fish were current in the religious framework of a great number of divinities, celestial, terrestrial, and infernal.[14] However, its principal symbolic function remained that of a *pure* food (involving no blood-letting), sacral, served at initiation feasts, in order that the new initiate by consuming them might acquire certain symbolic powers.

### 2. *The Ram*

As the fish is the principal attribute of the Goddess, the ram is that of the Riders. It is associated with them from the earliest monuments onward. The iconographic situations in which it is involved on the Danubian plaques are very varied. It is seen led to the altar for sacrifice, offered together with the bull, its head laid on a table or simply figured in different registers of the reliefs, hung from a tree to be flayed or dismembered, or else its mask is worn by Aries, as the Sign of the Ram constellation, or its head served at the mystical banquet, and so on.

---

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Dölger, *IXΘYC* II, p. 447.

As I have said, from the very beginnings of the sculptuary of the cult, the ram appears as the animal sacred to the Riders, with all the symbolic, religious, and mystical meanings thus implied, and interpreted by the rich spectrum of situations in which it is found in the religious imagery of these deities. Thus it appears in its most rudimentary form solely in the scenes of the Class A plaques, reproducing the moment of sacrifice. It is there seen dragged by its horns to the altar (9, c; 14; 16, c; 29, d; 55, c; 203, a). This scene is no longer to be found on the Class B plaques, with two Riders. The presence of Nemesis at these scenes of sacrifice (cf. p. 130ff) represents the silence which must be observed at the moment of holocaust. Sometimes this earliest scene is balanced by the image of a man seated and stretching a rod towards a tripod bearing the ram's head (cf. below, p. 234ff).

The complete image of the ram appears in the company of other animals, symbols, and cult objects in the lower registers of the reliefs of Classes A and B (1, c; 3, c; 11, B, 18, c; 24, b; 25, b; 27, b; 32, b; 48, c; 50, c; 57, c; 59, b; 62, b; 71, b; 72, d; 80, b; 83, c; 85, b; 88, c; 100, b; 104, b; 114, b; 119, b; 120, c; 140, b; 146, d; 160, b; 161, b; 174, c; 175, b; 176, b; 181, b; 182, c; 184, c; 193, A, c; 199, c; 210, d). In sixteen cases, the ram is shown decapitated and hung from a tree where a man is about to skin it (57, c; 111; 120, c; 125, d; 126, d; 127, d; 132, d; 133, d; 135, c; 137, d; 146, c; 155, d; 162, d; 171, d; 173, b; 194, A, c). This scene is connected with the *criobolium* ritual and in some cases we distinguish in close proximity the personage in whose favour the rite was performed. This personage is recognized by the ram's mask he wears. The theme, frequent in Pannonia, is absent in Dacia.

Linked with the celebration of the *criobolium* we note the presence of the initiate wearing the animal's mask (127, d; 132, d; 133, d; 135, c; 155, d; 157, b; 173, b; 195, c), the skin of the animal figured separately (48, a) or used in the course of a ceremony of *occultatio* (3, d; 25, b; 32, b; 50, c; 62, b; 84; 100, b; 182, c; 184, b). But in most cases, the presence of the ram is indicated only by its head, which appears in the different registers of the respective monuments, illustrating various iconographic situations. For instance, we note its presence close to the busts of Sol and Luna (120, a; 125, c; 162, a); near to the Riders' heads (45, b; 57, b); in an attendant's hand (174, b); not far from the horses' hooves, but without risk of being trampled by them (2; 46; 47, b; 62, a; 79; 90; 97; 99, b); deposited on a table in the lower registers (9, c; 16, c; 29, d; 113, c; 201, b; 202, C, c; 203); deposited on a crater, also in the lower registers (25; 65, b; 181, b); and especially in the series of other animals and cult objects at the base of the relief (34, e; 37, c; 44; 64, b; 75, d; 81, b; 82, b; 86, b; 87; 95, b; 96, b; 111; 113, c; 118, c; 127, e; 135, d; 137, d; 153, c; 190, b; 228, c).

As these statistics show, the ram is nearly always present in one form or another in the iconography of the Danubian Riders, just like the fish. Only seven monuments in a good state of preservation can be quoted in which it can be said with certainty that the artist has omitted the ram (6; 7; 47; 187; 189; 197; 200; 204). In connection with the ram sacrifice at the altar we must note the presence of the cock near by, as also of the ritual vases, the loaves, the fruits, and so on. I shall return to this subject later.

The development of the mysteries of the Danubian cult seems to have resulted in the disappearance of the scene of the ram dragged to the altar, which was replaced by those of the *criobolium* and the *occultatio*.[15] But there are also cases where in the lower registers the ram is shown in the neighbourhood of the altar, and this may have been an allusion to the sacrifice (26, b; 66, c; 85, b; 86, b; 104, b?; 176, b). On the Class B plaques, the presence of the ram accompanied by the bull indicates the double blood bath (*crio-taurobolium*). This is perhaps also the moment alluded to by the scene showing three men in the immediate neighbourhood of the two animals. They must have been the initiate accompanied by two mystagogues. The number three was imposed in consideration of its sacral character in the cult.

---

[15] Only one Class B monument (34, d) shows us a personage placing his right hand on an altar; but the nature of the object sacrificed is not defined.

The ram's head shown quite separate (with no table supporting it) may have been intended to denote a mask for an initiate who had gained the rank of *Aries*. The animal's body hanging from a tree was another allusion to the *criobolium*. These elements will be analysed later.

An important fact to notice is the existence of the ram as an animal sacred to the Riders even before the establishment of the sculptural forms of their cult. Its role on the earliest monuments is also that of an intermediary between the gods and their worshippers, by its sacrifice and the eating of its flesh during the religious agapes. But later, when our cult had been subjected to oriental influences, the ram was to assume a much more complex mystic symbolism. It was at this point that a good number of the eschatological and magical doctrines imported from the Orient were added to the occult powers attributed to the animal.

In any case the ram of the Danubian cult cannot be considered as borrowed from the Mithras cult or from any other analogous religion since it appears in these only in a sporadic fashion and clothed with minor attributes.[16] We cannot, however, deny some influence from the astrological beliefs peculiar to Mazdaism and connected with the constellation of the Ram and some of the animal's specific attributes.[17] It also had certain chthonic attributes, of a funerary kind, in virtue of its being an animal sacred to Hermes and Saturn,[18] and retained these in the Danubian Rider cult.

---

[16] Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, p. 414 (index). The animal is often met with in the Mithraic repertoire in Dacia; cf. Vermaseren, *op. cit.*, nos. 1928, 1935, 1958, 1972, 2084, etc., but rather sporadically in the other Danubian provinces. On Mithraic monuments it is associated with the dog and the goat and its functions are rather limited in comparison with the Danubian tablets, cf. Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 102, n. 6; 201f. and 212, n. 6.

[17] The Sun regenerated its cosmic forces by touching the constellation of the Ram, cf. Cumont, *op. cit.*, II, p. 110 and 201, and Graillot, *Cybele*, p. 278, n. 1. The astrologers thought the ram a repository of several occult powers; a friendly, virile, energetic, fiery, indefatigable, passionate animal, virtues which among others were connected with the constellation which bore its name, cf. Gundel, *PWRE* XI, 2, col. 1869-1886. The initiate to the Danubian Rider mysteries also hoped for a share of these virtues in receiving the *criobolium* and consuming the animal's meat at the mystical banquet. The same virtues were attributed to the image of the ram as met with on the standards of the Roman Army ,cf. Domaszewski, *AEMÖ* XV (1892), p. 183.

Another occult aspect of the ram emblem, equally acceptable to Danubian plaques, was its magical one. A number of superstitious people thought the ram's image on amulets or rings was capable of shielding them from a whole series of maladies.[19] In the Danubian regions the ram played an important part in the life of shepherd peoples. Local pre-Roman arts, notably that of Scythia, often employed among other ornamental themes the ram's head.[20]

In his discussion of the *principia vitae* of Mithraic art, Campbell[21] thinks the ram symbolized "the Celtic equivalent of the Syrian lion, a symbol of virile strength, or full life embodiment". Thus the ram too was a "symbol of the vital power".

### 3. *The Cock*

The cock is another very frequent symbol on the Danubian plaques. It has been found hitherto on nearly a hundred monuments. In two cases it is twice figured on the same relief (162 and 227). Usually it is on the bottom registers, those given over to mystery scenes and chthonic symbols and beliefs. More rarely it appears also beside the sun and moon deities. Another of its hypostases is as a symbol of one of the four natural Elements (in the group, snake, crater, lion).

Of the numerous contexts in which it appears in the repertoire of our monuments, most are susceptible of a symbolic or religious interpretation. On the Class A plaques the cock only appears in the bottom part of the field: between the crater and the Phrygian cap

---

[18] Pausanias, II, 3-4; see also: Prehn, *PWRE* XI, 2, col. 1866; Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 144; Dölger, *IXΘYC* II, p. 429 and Buday, *DolgSzeged* 1928, p. 134. It is found dedicated to Saturn on the funeral stelae of North Africa. It was believed that by sacrificing a ram a man's life could be saved (*anima pro anima sanguine pro sanguine, vita pro vita*); cf. H. Marrou, *Mél. d'arch. et d'hist.* (Éc. Franç. Rome), L (1933), fasc. I-V, p. 71ff.

[19] Gundel, *art. cit.*, col. 1879.

[20] Pârvan, *Getica*, p. 7 and D. Berciu, *Arta traco-getică*, București, 1969, p. 78f.

[21] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, pp. 281 and 286, cf. also Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 65.

(1, c); figuring in the scene of sacrifice of the ram (29, d; 55, c; 58, b; 203, c); beside the column with four spiral turns which also symbolizes the natural elements (200, c), and near the table with the fish (183, c). The only inference that can be made from all these situations is that the cock too was among the symbols inherited by the cult before it came into contact with other religions. In the beginning it can only have been connected with certain special rites and sacrifices.

With only a few exceptions, on the Class B plaques the cock keeps its place in the lower register. It is found in the neighbourhood of the spiral column (11, B; 153, c); close to the ram (18, c; 80, b; 27, b; 119, b; 140, b; 176, c; 199, c); beside the altar (20, c; 78, b; 83, c; 86, b; 160, b; 178, b); near the crater associated with the ram's head (25, b; 65, b; 66, c; 82, b; 113, c; 181, b; 184, b); associated with seven vases (194, A, d) or with the lamp and crater (26, b; 137, d; 204, c); in the company of the lion (42, d; 48; 71, b; 146, d; 148, b; 173, b; 191, A, c); with Nemesis in the *occultatio* scene (50, c; 62, b; 76, b; 95, b; 122, b; 125, d; 157, b; 175, b); near the fish (34, d; 114, b) and in the symbolic group of snake, crater, and lion (127, e; 132, e; 133, e; 135, d).

These statistics show that the cock retains his principal symbolic value of a chthonic being connected with certain beliefs and practices peculiar to the occult and mystery aspect of the Danubian religion. Only the combination snake-crater-lion-cock lends itself to a precise interpretation of the cock (cf. below, p. 227ff).

A limited number of monuments (of roundel type, distinguished by great disorder in the arrangement of the protagonists of different scenes) show the cock placed behind one of the Riders (57, b; 126, c; 162, c; 171, c). In view of the circumstances I think there is no reason in these cases to regard him as an attendant in the battle fought by the gods. His presence is no doubt to be explained by a fancy of the craftsman concerned.

On the other hand, there are several lead pieces in which the cock occupies an important place next to Sol, Luna, and the eagle, in the company of the lion and the bull, these last being interpreted as symbols of the respective constellations (72, b; 75, a; 120, a; 162, b; 228, A, c). There is a satisfactory explanation of this, as we shall see later. On an engraved gem of gnostic character (228) the cock is placed near the sun and moon deities in the pediment of a temple (or perhaps merely the architectural frame of the scene?). At the same time he figures also in the lower part of the composition, reserved for chthonic symbols. All the specialists attribute to this bird a value as a chthonic symbol, whether on the Danubian plaques in particular or on any cult monument.[22] This explains the fact that in most cases his outline is relegated to the lower part of the monument, like the symbolic death scene of the initiate, the underworld deities (Hermes, Nemesis, Hecate), and so on. In our special case the cock also has a general apotropaic meaning, for it is his song which drives off the darkness where demons sport, bringing light to burial places haunted by the spirit of Evil.[23] Moreover, it is not by chance, either, that this sacred bird was put also in the register representing the celestial regions on the Danubian plaques. His mission was to drive off by his song the demons of darkness who invade the earth during the night and make way for the splendours of dawn. It was this mission that was to make the cock the symbol of the "culmination of Genesis".[24]

Thus he can be considered in the Danubian Rider cult an element of Good, fighting on the side of the deities and their initiates against the forces of Evil. In the symbolic group of the four Elements (snake, crater, lion, cock) he is the personification of Air (cf. below, p. 228)—a character that would never have been given him but for this association. Finally, on the engraved gem from Perugia (228, a and c), where the cock figures twice, once in the register representing the celestial regions and once in that representing the world of the dead, we note that this double appearance in fact reflects his double symbolism—celestial and chthonic—in the Danubian Rider cult.[25]

---

[22] Especially Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 446 and II, pp. 406, 430; Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 292. In Mithraic sculpture of the Danubian provinces the cock is met with only sporadically, associated with Mercury, Cautes, Cautopates, and other chthonian elements (Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 1210, 1257, 1317, 1496, 2268; Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 144 and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 400 (index). A white cock was sacrificed to the god Mithras, cf. Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 43; and in Persian mythology, the bird symbolized "the royal fire", cf. S. Wikander, *Nouvelle Clio* 1-2 (1949-1950), p. 314.

[23] Scheftelowitz, *Das stellvertretende Huhnopfer*, p. 51ff. (in Chapouthier, *loc. cit.*) and R. Egger, *Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Römisch-Germanische Kommission*, Berlin-Lipsca, 1930, pp. 97-106; Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 43 and Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

[24] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 259; Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 284 and 298; Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 43 and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 64.

### 4. *The Snake*

It is an altogether exceptional omission for the snake to be absent from any Danubian plaque in a good state of preservation (3; 6; 18; 25; 59; 76; 77; 78; 99; 114; 175; 187; 200). And to make up for these, there are reliefs where he figures two or three times. Equally exceptional is the placing of the snake in the register of chthonic elements, at the bottom of the monument, where he appears as a general rule in the group symbolizing the four Elements (lion-crater-snake-cock). This is a sure sign that he is to be considered as an *agathodemon*, allied (like the lion) with the Riders. In the same way he was also the ally of Mithras.[26]

The places assigned to him on the different Danubian plaques are numerous and in most cases can be symbolically explained. The explanation is almost identical on the monuments of both the Classes A and B, except for the scene of the tree with the snake, and this (1, b; 41, a; 90), as has already been demonstrated, was in fact a borrowing from the iconography of the Thracian Rider (cf. above, p. 153ff).

Generally, the two confronted serpents surmounting the whole monument (and on the Class A monuments these are the only two) are not accompanied by any other element with a symbolic value (1, a; 45, a; 46). On the Pannonian lead plaques the snakes are placed outside whatever stands for the vault of heaven, in the two upper corners of the piece (127; 132; 133).

Rearing up behind the Riders and above the Goddess's head, in the upper part of the monuments, the snakes flank the celestial deities: Sol-Luna (42, a; 64, a; 81, b; 194, A, a); in five cases associated with the eagle (83, a; 146, a; 190, a; 191, A, b; 193, A, a); or else encircling the eagle on its own (56, a; 106, a). There are also some cases where the snakes flank the divine triad in the celestial regions (41, b; 92; 147, a; 149, a; 176, a). Quite a number of plaques show the two snakes approaching the Goddess's head above the Riders (4, b; 7, a; 19, b; 22, b; 28, b; 37, b; 47, a; 50, b; 71, a; 97; 135, b; 140, a; 150; 153, b; 155, b; 156, b; 173, a; 182, b; 188, A, a; 189, a; 204, b). In only two cases they rear up sinuously above the Goddess's head, towards the sun and moon deities (48, a; 83, a). Still in the celestial register, they also appear in association with other symbols: framing a lion's head (174)—emblem of the constellations of the same names. Finally, sometimes, in the top register, they flank some receptacle (crater, ovoid vase, etc.) in company with Sol, Luna, and the busts of the Riders (9, a; 10, a; 11, A, a; 15, a; 16, a; 29, b; 107, a; 108, a; 112, a; 113, a; 183, a; 202, a; 203, a). In two cases, they only flank the crater (55, a; 137, b).

---

[25] Tudor, *Das Altertum* VIII (1962), p. 239.

[26] Cumont *MMM* I, p. 70; Rostovtseff, *Röm. Mitt.* 49 (1934), p. 190 and *Yale Class. Studies* V, p. 280; Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 8; Benoit, *Hérоïs. équest.*, pp. 57 and 124 and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 15ff.

Many examples testify to the participation of the two snakes in the fight fought by the Riders (cf. above, p. 121), when they glide between the horses' hooves (23, b; 27, a; 38; 39, b; 66, b; 72, c; 80, b; 86, b; 105, b?; 148, b; 197, b). The same must be the explanation of the single snake in front of the single Rider of the Class A pieces (58, a; 79). It remains to be said that the snake appears as the companion at arms of certain equestrian gods of solar character in the iconography of oriental divinities, for instance Mithras Ephippos of Hama (Syria).[27]

In some of the lead roundels the bodies of the reptiles are transformed into a sort of flattened bracelet, completed by the two heads on a level with Sol and Luna and some other celestial elements. This "bracelet" type forms an ornamental frame for the whole array of scenes (57; 120, 125; 126; 162).

In the lower registers the snake is found only sporadically, on no uniform plan, although in the ancient world its associations included a close kinship with the earth. It is found, properly enough, in the symbolic group of the four Elements together with the vase, the lion, and the cock (127, e; 132, e; 133, e; 135, d); again in the company of the bull beside the crater (37, c; 75, d); or on its own with the receptacle in front of it (100, b). In one case only it disputes the tripod with the cock (195, c).

---

[27] Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 196 and fig. 13.

The snake's importance in the Danubian Rider cult is clear also from its other representations. Sometimes, for instance, it replaces the Goddess between the two Riders (197, a); or there are two snakes each coiled around a staff and both drinking from the same vase (193, B); two archers' bows, or a single bow, stylized in the form of a serpent's body (193, B; 197, b). Finally, in two cases, the snake is just emerging from a *cista mystica* placed beside the banquet (195, b and 196, b).

The question of the standard called the *draco* must also be considered in connection with the snake on the Danubian plaques (cf. above, p. 113ff).

The symbolic value to be attributed to the snake in all this varied range of situations on the Danubian plaques has been the subject of as many different interpretations. Some of the solutions are undoubtedly correct, while others are no more than hypothetical, especially when given by analogy with some related cult. In any event, the snake's presence on the earliest reliefs proves that it was from the beginning a religious and artistic element peculiar to this Geto-Dacian cult. The varied range of situations in which the craftsman's fancy later represented the snake on the Danubian monuments, especially those of Class B, shows how numerous were the influences operating on the initial beliefs.

Thus the two confronted serpents, rearing up their bodies in an arch to make a frame for the whole sculptural design and at the same time raising themselves to the level of the sun and moon deities or other celestial symbols, can be nothing other than a representation of the actual vault of heaven on which the stars travel in their courses (cf. above, p. 184ff). When shown separately at the Riders' sides (in front of them, by the heads of their mounts, etc.), the snakes must have the significance of acolytes of the warrior gods (cf. above, p. 122ff). If the ovoid vase is really to be identified with the cosmic egg, then the two serpents flanking it must be an emblem of the Dioscuri—deities often confused with the Danubian

Riders (cf. above, p. 164ff). Like the image of a snake coiled around a tree-trunk, which is no more than a casual artistic element, the unique appearance of a *cista mystica* disgorging a snake is a trail leading us to the mysteries of the goddess Isis.[28]

The head of a lion framed by two snakes has been interpreted by Hampel[29] as a kind of Mithraic *Aeon*. When we remember that the lion's head of Saturn in Mithraic iconography symbolizes the heat of the sun,[30] this seems just the right explanation of the Berlin bronze (174), which gives us the clearest image of the vault of heaven traced by the two arching snakes. But in this case it may also be, just as in the case of the bull's head the constellation concerned, that is Leo. And this explanation would change nothing in the cosmic interpretation of the two arching snakes.

A still clearer idea of the manner in which the ancients imagined the vault of heaven is given by the snake-bracelet with its two heads flanking celestial elements, as we see it on some of the Pannonian lead roundels. The image has analogies with certain Mithraic reliefs where the snake rolls himself up in a ring, biting his own tail, and constituting a symbol of eternity, δράκων οὐροβορός.[31]

Quite a number of those who have interpreted the Danubian plaques thought the snake was merely a chthonic symbol,[32] quoting a whole series of literary and archaeological sources in support. If, however, we examine the statistical distribution table of the snake on these monuments we are struck by the evident fact that its role was linked preeminently with the celestial regions. Its solar attributes were progressively enriched with each intensification of its contacts with the Mithraic religion. Nor can it be pretended, on the other hand, that its presence on the Danubian reliefs was altogether free from the influence of the cult of Sabazius, the Thracian god with whom the snake likewise played an important part.[33] The influence of the cult of Sabazius could have been felt from the beginning, for on the Class A Danubian monuments the single Rider, bearded and wearing his Phrygian cap, bears a strong resemblance to this god. What is more, we know that the Thracian peoples were much given to associating the snake with the cult they offered to different deities.

---

[28] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 260.

[29] Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1903, p. 364. Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 15, wrongly identified a degree of the mysteries (*leo*).

[30] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 74ff.; Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, p. 66. Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 80, proposed the identification of the course of the sun over the vault of heaven with the coiling of the serpent towards the head of the lion around the body of Saturn.

[31] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 80. In Dolichenian cult, the snake in sinuous coils symbolized the annual movement of the Sun, in Merlat's opinion, *JupDol.*, p. 47ff.

[32] Dölger, *IXΘYC* II, p. 431; Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 128, and Saxl, *Mithras*, p. 61. It was the chthonic element for numerous deities: Zeus, Sabazius, Hecate, Demeter, etc., cf. Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, II, 13. Its eminently chthonic character was maintained only by Deonna, *RA*, 1913, p. 308.

As in almost all the pagan religions, the snake was considered in the Danubian Rider cult as a genius of Good (*Agathos Daimon*). It was Christianity which changed things, making the snake into an enemy of man and a demon of Evil. There are scholars, moreover, who would decipher in the snake symbol of the Mithraic and Danubian monuments values common to both and much higher than those I have mentioned. Campbell[34] and Ochsenschlager, for instance, studying the symbolic and artistic theme of the *Principia Vitae* think "the Mēnōk (selfmoving) and Gētēh (physical) fortunes of the soul are emphasized by the coiling snakes that frame the upper corners of the relief".[35] Quoting ancient authors for the information that the snake in their time was "the most pneumatic and most long enduring of all creatures", Ochsenschlager interprets the presence of two snakes as a fact which "probably symbolizes the bipartite fire or energy, that of heaven and that of earth".[36]

---

[33] Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, II, 22, 4; Maximus of Tyre, II, 6; Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.*, III, 5, 12, etc. In Thrace Sabazius fused with Dionysus, cf. Eisele, Roscher *Lex.*, col. 232f. For Dionysus as snake and bull, see: Clem. Alex., *op. cit.*, II, 16; Arnobius, *Adv. Nationes*, V, 21; Nonnus Mythographus, *Dion*, in Migne, *Patrol. lat.*, VI, 563; etc. In the mysteries of Sabazius and Dionysus a snake was placed on the breast of the initiate; Dieterich, *op. cit.*, p. 123; Keller, *Antike Tierwelt*, II, p. 287, and Turchi, *Relig. mist.*, p. 23ff. For the symbolism of the snake in Dolichenian cult, see Merlat, *Rép. JupDol.*, pp. 267 and 333.

[34] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 234.

[35] Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 59.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 64 and the notes 80, 81. Cf. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 15 and 200 ("the Snake as the Pneuma of Life").

It seems certain that these interpretations can be scientifically justified from a scholarly point of view. They are based on Greek theological and philosophical speculation of the highest order and thus emanate from a world intellectually and educationally equipped to understand them. Such interpretations, however, would have been too fine-spun and too difficult for the humble world of worshippers of the Danubian Riders. These in general consisted only of simple peasants, half-civilized soldiery, and ordinary city folk. Moreover, it is unwise to generalize theological speculations like these without bearing in mind M. J. Vermaseren's warning: "The scope of any symbolism appropriate to a given moment of history depends in large measure on the degree of intellectual development of the community's members and the artist responsible".[37] The humble officiants of the Danubian Rider cult can hardly have aspired to the high theology of the Persian magi, while the native craftsmen must often have executed monuments of this kind without any sure grasp of the meaning of each scene they did their best to carve. What they might perfectly well understand was that the snakes of the Danubian plaques could at the same time symbolize the vault of heaven and, living as they did by crawling over the surface of the earth, the terrestrial element.

## 5. *The Lion*

The regions where the Danubian Rider cult was cradled did not know the lion. This explains its rather tentative presence on some of the pieces we can count among the earliest, and clearly indicates it as a borrowed element (1, c; 55, c; 59; 77; 79; 174, a). Its distribution in the different registers of our plaques was as varied as the interpretation of its functions. In most cases the lion is found in the lower registers, mixed with other symbols or cult objects (1, c; 32, b; 42, d; 47, b; 55, c; 62, b; 65, b; 66, b; 71, b; 75, b; 78, b; 81, c; 86, b; 88, c; 104, b; 120, c; 153, c; 160, b; 162, b; 173, b; 190, c; 191, A, c; 194, A, c; 199, c). But it played a part also as companion at arms of one of the Riders in 19 pieces, belonging to Classes A and B (18, b; 27, a; 49; 59, a; 64, a; 77; 79; 80, a; 85, a;

---

[37] Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 150.

87; 97; 104, a; 118, a; 122, a; 153, b; 154, a; 181, a; 184, a; 208, c). As has been shown above, this artistic detail was borrowed from the iconography of the Thracian Rider.[38]

When the lion is shown in anger, confronting a vase (usually a crater) as if it were an enemy, it must undoubtedly symbolize the combat between two of the natural Elements—the lion = fire, the vase = water (34, d; 37, c; 48, c; 57, c; 83, c; 118, b; 126, d; 146, d; 155,c). Some of the Pannonian lead plaques expand this detail into the group snake-crater-lion-cock. In only three cases is the lion shown in the celestial regions with Sol, Luna, and the raven (41, a) or with the eagle, the bull, and the cock (72, b), and once its head alone between two snakes (174, c). Here undoubtedly an allusion must be seen to the constellation Leo and its heat-giving powers.

On the engraved gems it is once shown charging to the right and accompanied with the inscription λέων (192, B), or again, still in full charge, surmounted with a lunar crescent and a star, with an indecipherable inscription below its paws (191, B). Two other engraved gems show the lion in the form of a sphinx, together with a *cista mystica* (195; 196, c). In one case only, on a stone fragment, a man is shown wearing a lion's mask (100, b).

The lion's image, or its name, or other magical inscriptions involving it on the gems were tokens of recognition among those initiates who had attained the rank of *leo* in the secret cult of the Danubian Riders. This is attested as a degree of initiation by the image of the man wearing a lion's mask, representing the initiate himself during the occult rites. In addition, such gems were endowed also with phylacteric properties in virtue of the occult powers attributed to the lion.

Egyptian influences, from the cult and mysteries of Isis and Osiris, must be inferred from the image of the lion as sphinx and in the company of the *cista mystica*.[39]

---

[38] See above, p. 153ff. Cf. also Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 21; Seure, *Rev. de philol.*, LIV, p. 135; Kazarow, *Germania*, 19 (1935), p. 315; Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 218, and Cumont, *RA*, 1938, p. 70.

[39] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 137 and Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 262. Plutarch informs us that the horse and the lion were animals associated in the fight against Evil, see Giglioli, *ArchClass* III (1951), p. 205.

But in general the lion symbolized the heat of the sun and fire as a natural Element—a symbolism which is clearly indicated by its inclusion in the snake-cock-crater group. Quite a number of artistic and religious elements connected with the lion were imposed on the Danubian Rider cult by the models of the Thracian Rider and Mithras cults. This does not mean that other religions including the lion among their characteristic symbols did not also play their part. The lion figures in the cults of Atargatis, Cybele, Hecate, and others whose syncretism with the Great Goddess of the Danubian Rider cult has been proved.[40] But we shall better understand the meaning of the lion on the Danubian plaques by studying it with the group of four Elements constituting the *principia vitae.*

### 6. *The Dog*

The dog is seen in the lower registers (23, b; 34, c; 72, e; 181, b). In four cases it is placed under the horse's belly, replacing the lion as companion at arms of one of the Riders (118, a; 152, a; 154, a; 182, b). All the same, we cannot be fully confident of its identification, for three of the four monuments in question are not very clear and the fourth is known only by a drawing. Perhaps, too, it is still a dog that we should recognize in the so-called griffon (62, b) of the relief brought to light in Moesia, for it is placed beside Nemesis, who is usually associated with this animal.

At all events, the dog appears only on the Class B monuments. Also, it cannot be considered as an artistic or religious theme borrowed from the iconography of the Thracian Rider. On the other hand, it plays a very important part in the Mithras cult,[41] where it is a symbol of the Good. But on the Danubian plaques man's faithful protector reveals none of the functions attributed to it on the Mithraic reliefs. It follows that we cannot determine for certain whether it was or was not borrowed from another cult or give it a precise symbolic value on our monuments.

---

[40] Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 446 and II, p. 428ff. The lion was an attribute of Atargatis according to Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I, 23, 20. For the lion as a symbol of strength, of fire, and as a degree in the Mithraic mysteries see Cumont, *MMM* I, pp. 79, 315, 320. As conveying Force and Victory, cf. Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 196.

[41] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, 127ff.

### 7. *The Symbolic Group of the Four Elements constituting the Principia Vitae*

The various religious speculations concerning the four cosmic Elements (air, earth, water, and fire) have found their echo in themes carved on the Danubian plaques. In conformity with oriental notions of theology the four Elements appear in various symbolic forms in their sculpture. Thus we find the *Principia Vitae* in different combinations on the Danubian plaques, varying in number from two to four. Their presence can be identified in some embryonic fashion on the earliest monuments, from which they evolve progressively, until on some of the Pannonian lead plaques they assume their classic form.

The manner of their grouping can only be defined when there is a clear opposition between them. The most complete form is the group snake-crater-lion-cock (127, e; 132, e; 133, e; 135, d), placed in the bottom register of some of the lead plaques made in Lower Pannonia and Upper Moesia by the same third-century craft centres. Often the crater has the aspect of a cantharus. It is regularly flanked by the snake and the lion, attacking to gain possession of the vase, while the cock preserves a passive attitude, withdrawn into a corner. But these artistic themes are unknown to the Class A monuments, as they were to the other Danubian provinces.

Frequently, two snakes flank a receptacle (crater, ovoid vase, cantharus, etc.). This emblem is usually situated in the top register —often near to the sun and moon deities and the busts of the triad (9, a; 10, a; 11, A, a; 15, a; 16, a; 29, b; 55, a; 100, b; 107, a; 108, a; 112, a; 113, a; 137, a; 183, a; 202, a; 203, a). The group may have symbolized the eternal opposition between earth (the snake) and water (the vase). The lion opposed to the vase (34, a; 37, e; 48, c; 57, c; 83, c; 118, d; 126, d; 146, d; 155, c) may have illustrated the opposition between fire and water in the natural world.

Instead of the vase as a symbol of water, we sometimes find the fish, which the king of beasts sometimes faces just as aggressively

(81, c; 190, c; 194, A, c). There are other possible associations besides these, but their interpretation remains uncertain, since in most cases all we have are isolated symbols.

As a symbol of fire, the lion is linked with Mazdaism, a system of belief fairly widespread among ancient authors. The association of the lion with fire is explained by the fact that during the very hot weather the sun was traversing the Leo constellation.[42] According to Porphyry,[43] the crater of the *Mithraea* was the emblem of a spring of water, and this it was which prompted Cumont[44] to interpret this vase as a water symbol. As for the snake, we have already seen above (p. 219 ff) that it personified in the first instance the underworld powers, while its role also as the emblem of earth is no longer disputed by anyone. There remains the fourth element, the air which seems to have had the cock as its symbol, present but passive at the encounters between the more active elements. This calm attitude of the cock would be in accord with the notion of air as the least active of the four principles.

From the accounts of ancient authors, Cumont was the first to explain the symbolic group of the Elements appearing on Mithraic monuments from Gaul, Germany, and central Europe, where the group consists of a snake coiled around a crater which the lion seems to be attacking. He concluded that the three symbols represented earth, water, and fire respectively, while the fourth element, air, was symbolized by the cap of Mithras.[45] Saxl has expressed doubts about this interpretation of Cumont's.[46] Appealing to the oracles of Porphyry, he denies that the crater could have symbolized water, and emphasizes the absence of any unassailable symbol of air. He does not, however, dispute the symbolism of the lion and the snake on the Mithraic monuments. Moreover, Saxl does recognize that in the case of the Danubian plaques, the group of the four Elements is figured in a much more unified and intelligible manner. As the lion, the snake, and the crater entered the repertoire of the Danubian plaques at a period later than the Mithraic monuments, he claims that they are to be interpreted rather differently in the two cults.[47]

---

[42] Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos*, II, 2, 3; Tertullianus, *Adv. Marcionem*, I, 13; Macrobius, *Sat.*, I, 2; Iulianus, *Or.*, V, 167 and Aelianus, *Nat. anim.*, XII, 7; cf. also Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 80, 101; Dieterich, *Abraxas*, Leipzig 1891, p. 58, and Keller, *op. cit.*, I, p. 45ff.

[43] Porphyrius, *De antro nympharum*, 18.

[44] Cumont, *op. cit.*, I, p. 101.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 103, 116, 298, and *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 117. On the most characteristic Mithraic monuments with this symbolic group see Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 1083, 1118, 1149, 1206, 1283, 1292, 1306, 1359, 1388 etc. In the tympanum of a bas-relief from Gaul (*ibid.*, I, 985) a cantharus can be distinguished with the snake coiled round it and surrounding it the lion, the bird, and the whip, all flanked by Sol and Luna. S. Loeschcke, *Die Erforschung des Tempelbezirkes im Albachtale zu Trier*, Berlin 1928, p. 16, Saxl, *Mithras*, p. 60 and Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 404ff. have identified in this group the four cosmic Elements, air being symbolized by the whip.

The analysis of the symbolism of the Elements on the Mithraic monuments was taken still further by Campbell. For him "the fish, a creature of the waters, symbolizes an important power of Aphrodite-Astarte-Anahita as Goddess of the *Aqua Vitae*".[48] In terms of his same theory of the *Principia Vitae* theme, for Campbell "the lion was a symbol of the physical principle of fire in the embodied soul, and when coupled with the *Oenochoe* or *Kantharos* it probably indicates the descent of the soul into a physical body".[49] Campbell's study of the *Principia Vitae* ends in the conclusion that on the

---

[46] For Saxl, *op. cit.*, p. 63ff., on the reliefs of Roman Germany the group was placed beneath the belly of the dying bull to show us that the lion symbolized the fiery Element of the soul leaving the animal's body. For this reason the lion and the snake attempt to drink the bull's blood deposited in the crater, which was considered as "the vase of life". On a *terra sigillata* cup found in Gaul (cf. Vermaseren, *CIMRM* I, 998) we see together the lion, the crater, the snake, and the bird, a grouping which was for the first time compared with the similar theme on the Danubian monuments by E. Krüger, *Westdeut. Zeitschr.*, XXV (1906), p. 464, and then by Saxl, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[47] Saxl, *op. cit.*, p. 18ff., also agrees that on the Danubian plaques water may have been symbolized by the fish and air by the cock. It must be emphasized that on the two categories of bas-reliefs (Mithraic and Danubian) the principal Element was the crater (the vase) because around it is concentrated the fight between the lion and the snake. Symbolically we must see *the fire* (the lion) attempting to vaporize the water; *the earth* (the snake) which tends to absorb it and *the vase* which seeks to conserve it; see F. Drexel, *Das Kastel Faimingen*, 1911, p. 94 ,and Dieterich, *Abraxas*, pp. 51, 97.

[48] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 232; cf. also Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 60.

[49] Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67, 287, 331ff. and Ochsenschlager, *loc. cit.*

Mithraic monuments as well as on the Danubian plaques, these principles are symbolized only by the vase, the snake, and the lion, each with its proper meaning: the vase being the equivalent of the *Aqua Vitae*, the snake of the *pneuma* (not therefore of Earth), and the third, the lion, of "fullest physical life".[50]

There is nothing to prevent our identifiying, whatever other attributes may be conferred on them, the crater with water, the lion with fire, and the snake with earth. By their interactions these Elements gave rise to important natural phenomena, to birth, growth, the proliferation of being. Air, colourless and invisible, with powers yielding to those of the other elements, difficult to represent allegorically, was not given material substance by the artists until the very last. This explains why it was absent from the Mithraic and Danubian monuments or only vaguely represented there. Sometimes it was symbolized by a bird, the aerial creature by definition—cock, eagle, or raven.[51] As for the vase (cantharus, amphora, crater, etc.), it could easily be replaced at a symbolic level by the fish, an aquatic creature with a very important role in the Danubian Rider cult. The mere image of the fish would make any votary, however humble, think of the liquid element. In view of the great importance of fire in the beliefs connected with Mazdaism, its emblem (the lion) could never be missing from the various allegorical combinations symbolizing the Elements, whether on the Mithraic monuments or on the Danubian plaques.

But other interpretations also have been proposed for the Elements symbolized on the Danubian plaques. For instance, the four horses harnessed to the quadriga of *Sol Invictus* (cf. above, p. 183ff) could at need also symbolize fire, air, water, and earth.[52] Similarly, it seems that the small column with four spiral turns, present on monuments of Classes A and B (1, c; 7, b; 11, B; 23, b; 37, b?; 64, b?; 72, d; 76, b; 111; 122, b; 153, c; 175, b; 184, b; 200, b; 204, c)[53] was also an allusion to the cult of the Elements. This short length of spiral column is placed in the lower regions of the plaques. Closely examined, it cannot be explained as a snake coiled round a trunk.[54] Nor can it indicate the course of the stars on the vault of heaven since it is placed in the lower registers. Its four spiral turns, often reproduced in the form of four discs of circular or quadrilateral section, can only be an allusion to the Four Elements (the only entities, apart from the Winds and the Seasons, to be four in number). Their superposition agrees with the Mazdaist doctrine that the Four Elements composing the *Principia Vitae* were superposed on one another in the universe, air and water having their due places between earth and fire.[55]

---

[50] Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 287ff. Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 74, and *Hist. relig.*, I, p. 513, accepts Cumont's interpretation concerning the symbolization of fire by the lion, of earth by the snake and water by the crater.

[51] Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 118, in studying the inscriptions and sculptures found in the Mithraeum of Santa Prisca (Rome) shows that the raven symbolized air (*corax* = air); that around this bird certain rites were practised (*corvina* or *coracina sacra*); that the lion was the emblem of *fire*, while the soldier represented earth.

[52] Vermaseren, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

The cult of the four cosmic Elements comes from the oriental world.[56] On the Mithraic model, it was introduced also in a humble way into the Danubian Rider cult. This adoption can have taken place only on the religious level. For on the artistic level the development of the lion-crater-snake-cock theme was to have a quite separate development.

---

[53] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 140.

[54] On mon. 153, c the small column was painted. Sometimes the four spiral turns of the column rest on a block which was the base. The capital is always absent, sure proof for me that we cannot see in this a column which is a mere architectural or ornamental element. On two bas-reliefs found in Dacia, it seems that two colonnettes have been carved with an uncertain number of spiral turns. We must eliminate the hypothesis that they represent cylindrical altars with external spirals, because their outlines are lacking (1, c; 23, b; 72, d). The altars carved on the Danubian plaques have a different shape (cf. below, p. 263). It is not possible either to identify the four spiral turns as a *lyre* or a *grid* (cf. Tudor, *Dacia*, N.S. V (1961), p. 234, and below, p. 272).

[55] S. Eitrem, *Die vier Elementen als Mysterienweihe*, in *Symbolae Osloenses* IV (1926), p. 58. In the Osiris myth the cult of the pillar (*Zed*) is well known, cf. A. Moret, *Le Nil et la civilisation égyptienne*, Paris 1926, p. 153ff.

[56] Cumont, *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 118ff. and Graillot, *op. cit.*, p. 199; J. Thiele, *Hermes* XXXII (1897), p. 68, and Eitrem, *op. cit.*, IV (1926), p. 39ff. and V (1927), p. 39ff. The most valuable information is to be found in: Firm. Maternus, *op. cit.*, cap. I-VI, and Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, III, 4.

# PART SIX

## RITES AND MYSTERIES OF THE DANUBIAN RIDER RELIGION

Apart from elements of ritual and symbolic elements, the Danubian plaques figure also a whole series of images of which the content leads us into the world of occult practices and mysteries. The place of these images is always in the lower register, immediately under the principal scene of the myth. They appear already on the Class A monuments, although in rather rudimentary forms—sacrifices of animals, practised of course according to a special ritual, or else mystic images. Later, we come in the end to regular mystery scenes (*teletai*), gradually rounded off and elaborated, especially from the moment when the single Rider of the earlier stages was doubled and when the contact with other cults already possessing their own mysteries had become more lively.

The liturgy in the Danubian Rider cult, however, must have comprised elements common to all cults, such as offerings, prayers, bodily and spiritual purifications, a mystery play representing the battle of the gods, their sufferings and victory, the symbolic death, the revelation of the resurrection, the mystical banquet, and so on. A good spectacle staged by the priests would help to make a profound impression on the congregation. The redemptive act of the deity, snatching the initiates from the dominion of death, constituted the culminating point of the liturgy. Unfortunately, the sculpture of our monuments is in general too rudimentary to allow a precise interpretation of these scenes.

On the other hand, the cult also possessed a public ceremonial accessible to all believers, whereas the mysteries were open only to those who by initiation had become worthy to experience them. Most of the initiates would be concerned above all with the central point of the mysteries, the symbolic death followed by resurrection of the initiate.[1]

---

[1] Vermaseren, *Mithras*, pp. 82, 125; Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 63ff.,

Very probably, some of these mystical practices went back to the very beginnings of the cult, in its first phase of development. As we know, these mysteries rehearsed the deeds done in the myths of the presiding deities, by means of a particular ceremony. But what we know of the myth of the Danubian Rider-Gods is very little in terms of hard fact. All the information we have is that provided by the central scene, the victory of the Riders and the banquet held in the celestial regions. There are, however, quite a number of other scenes still to be discussed in my section on the mysteries themselves. Among these we note particularly: the man fishing, before the tripod with the ram's head; the *crio-taurobolium*; the *occultatio*; the three degrees of initiation; the mystical banquet.[2]

I have already noted the scarcity of information in the Danubian plaques about the most elementary forms of these *teletai*. We cannot clearly recognize either the *devotio* (laying on of hands), *infusio* (pouring on of water), *purgatio* (purification), the fasting, or the offerings. And yet the Rider cult must have known such ceremonies, of standard occurrence in all mystery practice. They were designed to ensure the purity of the μύσται washing them free of all the impurities to which the human body, thought, and feelings are liable. Only after having undergone such a purification could the initiates become ἐπόπται, that is, "those who may see the supreme rites". It was intended to raise the moral fervour of the initiates in aspiring to a better life after their "death". The vow of secrecy in these two phases of initiation is known from what Pausanias (XXXVIII, 7) says about the Eleusinian mysteries: "My dream forbids me to describe what was inside the walls of the sanctuary. Non-initiates will certainly know that it is unlawful even to hear tell of things that they are not allowed to see."

What now matters is to establish the true succession of these stages, traversed by the *mystae* under the direction of one (or more)? mystagogues. At the end of this journey the initiate was promised

---

calls the former "the divine mechanism" and the latter "the human mechanism". See also Briem, *Mystères*, p. 218ff., and Vermaseren, *Hist. relig.*, I, p. 512ff.

[2] Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 265ff.; *Das Altertum* VIII (1962), p. 240, and Ochsenschlager, *loc. cit.*

an ascent to the celestial regions, there to be united with the divinity.

In order to interpret the Danubian plaques correctly, we must rely on what is known about mystery practices in general. We start from the fact that most mysteries were based on rites of vegetable magic, natural fertility, the seed of life. We must then look for the same order of ideas in the Danubian Rider mysteries. These, we know, also had as their mission the fight against the spiritual forces of Evil, on earth as in the cosmos at large. From earth the Danubian Riders mounted to heaven, the habitations of a pure, eternal world. It was to this world they lifted up the faithful after death, votaries who had practised their secret cult, undergoing mystical intoxication in shadowy sanctuaries. The liturgy of the mysteries had its own dramatic character, emphasized by such details as the bound hands of the initiate, the bandaged eyes, and so on. The experience was described for us by Apuleius (*Metam.*, XI, 23): "I approached the very gates of death and set one foot on Proserpine's threshold, yet was permitted to return rapt through all the elements."

### 1. *The man "Fishing", seated before the Tripod with the Ram's Head*

The scene of the man fishing (with rod and line) is found only on the Class A reliefs. It is always on the extreme right of the bottom register (9, c; 16, c; 29, a; 55, c; 183, c; 200, b; 201, b; 202, C, b; 203, c). This scene appears only on the stone plaques, carved with a lack of skill which has made its interpretation all the more difficult.[3] Fortunately the fragment of a plaque found at Tibiscum has almost completely cleared up the problem of what it represents (201, b). We have a male personage seated on a block of stone (replaced in only one case by a chair, 55, c) and turning his back on all the other scenes of the register concerned. He is dressed in some cases in a tunic, with a Phrygian cap on his head (201, b; 55, c). His right hand is extended towards the tripod and holds a long rod at the end of which hangs an oblong object. On the Tibiscum fragment this oblong object is clearly drawn as a fish (201, b). Thus we have a rod and line with which the man is fishing. The line with the fish at the end is directed towards the tripod on which the ram's head is lying. From this I am inclined to suppose that the fragmentary object reproduced on a terracotta plaque from Sucidava (40, b) and resembling a harpoon must have formed part of some fishing appliance.

---

[3] See my hesitations in *ED* VII, p. 266.

On some reliefs the scene is not reproduced clearly or in full (29, c; 201, b; 202, C, b; 203, c). On other pieces it appears with some lack of precision (16, c) or in variants invented by the sculptor. On a fragment from Potaissa, for instance, the fish is lacking (9, c); a terracotta from Viminacium (55, c) shows two circular objects on the table and below it a sort of amphora which could conceivably pass for a fish and towards which the man is aiming his line. Another plaque, of unknown provenance, shows the table with the rams' head behind the "fisherman". On another fragment from Tibiscum (200, c) the whole scene has undergone modifications. We see a tripod supporting a circular object towards which two persons are reaching out their arms. It may be that this distortion of the original scene was again what the stone-carvers of Tibiscum had reproduced on a Class B plaque (204, c). This time the tripod is replaced by a four-legged table with a stemless cup on it. Two male persons flanking the table stretch out their arms towards the cup.

It is difficult to make any precise guess at the mystical meaning of this scene. No doubt we have an initiate presented with the two principal symbols of the cult, which were at the same time the divine foods consumed at the sacral agape, in other words the fish and the ram, the one just caught, the other ready to be eaten. As I have already emphasized, the scene is characteristic of the Danubian plaques from Dacia belonging to Class A, at the moment of greatest success of the cult, just when it was on the point of doubling the single Rider of its beginnings. It disappears, together with the neighbouring scene of the sacrifice of the ram at the altar, once the two-Rider theme has been adopted. So far as concerns the ram sacrifice, it is certain that on the Class B reliefs it was replaced by the practice of the *criobolium*. The "fishing" scene, on the other hand, was to be replaced by a varied group of symbols. In certain cases, it is possible that it was replaced by the scene of the sacred banquet served to the initiate after the initiation ceremony.

Perhaps the scene of fishing before the tripod with the ram's head may be a rudimentary allusion to this custom of the mystic agape. After the votary had performed the sacrifice of the ram, whose blood would have been used for his own purification, he was served a mystical meal, with dishes prepared from the flesh of the two divine animals consecrated to the deities. It must further be emphasized that nowhere else but in the fishing scene does the ram's head appear placed directly on the tripod. This is usually reserved for the fish of the Goddess and other objects used in the divine banquet. Thus the neophyte presumably had to eat at his banquet the fish which he himself had caught, and other sacred dishes besides. Thus he is seen in the familiar posture of a fisherman, with rod and line, on the banks of running water or pools, sitting on the bare earth in wait for his prey. This leads me to think that the places reserved for the Danubian Rider cult must have been situated by springs of water or fish pools, so that the recent initiate might himself catch the fish, which he had to eat quite fresh. The presence of the ram's head on the tripod does not at all mean that this part of the animal was consumed, but only symbolized the meat to be eaten by the initiate during the mystical banquet. The meat was that of the animal sacrificed, and the scene of sacrifice always accompanied the "fishing" scene.

## 2. *The Man with Arms Outstretched towards the Crater*

A scene long neglected by students,[4] but rich in symbolic meaning in the development of the mysteries, is represented on eight pieces of the Class B monuments (20, b; 24, b; 65, b; 66, c; 78, b; 119, b; 153, b; 178, b). This scene too appears only on the stone plaques and is carved in each case in a rather perfunctory manner or with numerous errors (variants?). When the scene is complete and distinctly executed, it shows a male personage walking towards the crater on which a ram's head (oblong or circular) is deposited (24, b;

---

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

65, b; 153, b). Often, instead of the crater there is an altar (20, b; 78, b; 119, b; 178, b) and on the other side a fleeing ram (24, b; 65, b). On two reliefs (66, c; 153, c) near the crater is seen also an altar, on which the man is placing an object of indeterminate form. Several times the cock is shown near the crater.

It is difficult to find a unique and satisfactory explanation of this scene, which must once have been completed by painting, in colours long since washed away, not only to beautify it but to make its meaning plain. As we already know, the crater had numerous symbolic senses and served many purposes in this cult (cf. p. 268), as in other mysteries.[5] The ram's head placed on the crater may give this latter the appearance of a *cista mystica*, containing, with various sacral objects, the mask of Aries(?), which the initiate is about to take up with outstretched hands.

### 3. The *Criobolium* and the *Taurobolium*

It appears that the act of killing and flaying the ram and the bull constituted the first degree of the mysteries which promised their initiates—through a divine revelation—happiness in the next world.

This ritual of purification and mystical regeneration by the blood of the sacrificed animal was performed originally, when only a single Rider was worshipped (Class A monuments), by the usual sacrifice of the ram and the bull at the altar (9, c; 14; 16, c; 29, d; 55, c; 203, c). The picture of the sacrifice always preceded that of the "fishing". The officiant of the sacrifice dragged the ram towards the altar. This was of the usual form, and near it we sometimes see the cock (waiting its turn to be sacrificed), loaves, vases, and so on. The solemnity of the act was guaranteed by the implacable presence of Nemesis (55, c).

There is evidence that at the time when only a single Rider was worshipped, the bull was sacrificed as well as the ram. In two cases, on Class A plaques, it is seen either ready for sacrifice, with the

---

[5] In the mysteries of Cybele, the telestarch poured water from a crater on the neophyte's head. The vase symbolized the sacred spring, cf. Graillot, *Cybèle*, p. 177.

*taeniae* or fillets thrown over its back (29, a), or beside the ram, among other symbols and sacrificial details (174, b).

The *criobolium* is clearly reproduced only on certain lead plaques and roundels from Pannonia. They are Class B reliefs, and though they have long been known they were first meticulously studied, with reference to their typology and meaning, by Ochsenschlager.[6] We bear in mind that the scene of the *criobolium* is always situated in the lower registers. We see it in its simplest form on the lead roundels, as well as on some aedicular plaques of the same metal. These pieces were cast in Pannonia or else in Upper Moesia (57, c; 120, c; 125, d; 126, d; 127; 137, d; 162, c). There is a ram, decapitated, hanging on a tree with three branches (a sacred number) and about to be skinned by a man. The same scene, in this very simplified form, is reproduced on a relief from Poetovio (155, d) and on an engraved gem of unknown origin (194, A, b). The stone fragment from Salonae (111) adds a further element to this composition, as does also the copper plaque from Virunum (173, b). On these, besides the ram decapitated and flayed by a man clothed in a tunic, we see a vase placed under the tree from which the victim is hanging. This receptacle is to collect the blood. The ram's head is leaning to one side (111) or else, transformed into a mask, it is carried by another person in the same register (173, b).

An artistic representation of the *criobolium* is offered by the five series of Pannonian lead plaques (127, 132, 133, 135, 146). The first three types (127, d; 132, d; 133, d) reproduce the scene as follows: there is the tree with the decapitated ram, and a man about to skin it, assisted in his task by another person wearing the mask of the animal's head. On the plaque (135, c) the same scene is completed by a vase at the foot of the tree, destined to receive the ram's blood. Another piece (146, c, from Hrtkovć) shows the same scene, with the difference that the officiant's helper is quite naked and wears no mask. The image is completed also by a *miles*, the table with the fish on it, and a branched candlestick with a *lucerna* above it. The ram is figured once more in the following register. Some pieces show the officiant who skins the ram protected from bloodstains by an apron (127, d; 135, c).

---

[6] Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 52ff. See also Ianošić, *OA* VI (1966), p. 49ff.

On the practice of the *taurobolium* the Class B plaques give less information than in the case of the ram. The two animals are shown none the less, either entire or merely their heads (3, c; 32, b; 37, d; 88, c; 100, b; 182, b; 194, A, b). This leads me to think that there was perhaps a *crio-taurobolium*, a sacrifice of both animals for the initiate. When the bull appears in other situations (34, b; 42, d; 72, b; 75, c), this must be seen doubtless as an allusion to its role in the preparations of the *taurobolium* separately or in association with the *criobolium*. Always attached to the celebration of the *criobolium* or *taurobolium* are objects like the grid and the sieve figuring on some of the pieces (81, c; 195-196, c).[7] The appearance of isolated daggers on certain Danubian plaques can be considered as an allusion to the *crio-taurobolium* (34, c; 37, c; 47, b; 48, a and c (?); 62, b; 71, b; 75, d; 83, a; 137, d; 173, b; 191, A, c; 228, A, c), in the same way as the daggers on certain altars consecrated to the goddess Cybele constitute a reference to the *taurobolium*. On two of our Danubian plaques, the daggers are arranged exactly at the Goddess's feet (134, c and 288, A, c). The trapezoidal shape of the dagger carved on the copper plaque from Virunum (173, b) shows us that this was not just any knife but the specific implement used also by the Roman priests and known by the name *culter sacrificialis*.

But the pictorial information given us by the Danubian reliefs is far from telling us what were the detailed ceremonies of baptism with the blood of the two animals. It is probable that they followed the same procedures as in the cult of Cybele.[8] All the same, the blood of a knifed ram could only have been a tiny quantity compared with that collected from the sacrifice of a bull. Duthoy[9] has established several successive phases in the practice of *taurobolium*, from the ordinary sacrifice at the altar to the blood-bath taken by the neophyte. From these premises we can also infer three stages in the development of the *criobolium*, evolving with time. The most ancient form appears on the Class A plaques, representing the sacrifice of the animal at the altar. A second phase is sketched on two monuments (111 and 173, b), where we see the collection of the blood from the decapitated and flayed animal. Once collected in a vase, the blood would serve for the series of purification ceremonies (by the anointment of the body with blood). It was only the third phase of the *criobolium* which came to mean a veritable bath of blood. This was in fact a *crio-taurobolium*, a combined sacrifice, that is, of the ram and the bull over a trench occupied by the priest or by a naked *mystes*.[10] It is the explanation of the presence of the two animals side by side on most of the Danubian monuments. Knifed both together over the grating placed across the trench, the mixture of their blood poured down over the neophyte, naked at the bottom of the trench, and expecting after this bath, this ritual unction and purification, to start again on a new life.[11]

---

[7] On four tablets (64, b; 73, b; 75, d; 111) the identification is unsure. On the bronze plaque from Rome, catalogued as Class A, it is very clear —but it can also be identified as a lyre, an instrument well known in the bas-reliefs of the Thracian Rider, cf. Kazarow, *Denkmäler*, p. 13.

[8] Duthoy, *Taurobolium*, p. 61ff. and n. 11—considers the *criobolium* ceremonial identical with that of the *taurobolium*.

[9] Duthoy, *op. cit.*, p. 112ff.

The *taurobolium* as a ritual of purification and regeneration of initiates, called to a new life by the act, has been described by the Christian poet Prudentius (about 400 A.D.) in gripping lines.[12] He tells us of the great priest (*archigallus*) of Cybele "who plunges into a trench dug in the earth to receive his consecration there". The opening of this trench was covered by a sort of grid of strong slats.

---

[10] Bibliographical sources for the *taurobolium* are to be found in Duthoy, *op. cit.*, p. IXf. For the *criobolium*, see Cumont, *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 190; *Relig. orient.*, p. 63ff., 135; *PWRE* IV, 2, col. 1718f.; Toutain, *Cult. païens* II, p. 84ff.; Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kultus*, p. 271; Showerman, *Encycl. Relig. and Ethics*, vol. 4, p. 314; vol. 12, p. 12; Turchi, *Relig. mist.*, p. 147ff.; Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 25; Cesano, in De Ruggiero, *Dizion. epigrafico* II, 2, p. 1275ff.; Le Gall, *Karthago* 9 (1958), p. 119ff.; Vermaseren, *Hist. relig.*, I, p. 518ff.; Duthoy, *op. cit.*, p. 60, and *Latomus* XXVII (1968), p. 622ff. The origin of the word *criobolium* (κριοβόλιον) is Greek.

[11] On the pediments of taurobolic inscriptions found in the Rhine valley (cf. Duthoy, *Taurobolium*, p. 61 and nos. 84-86, 91, 93, 95-97 etc.) the heads of the bull and the ram are found carved together, but their epigraphic texts only mention the *taurobolium*, see also Toutain, *Cult. païens* II, p. 88.

[12] Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, hymn. X, 1006-1050; cf. Tertull. *De praescr. haeret.* 40, Anonymous, *Carmina contra paganos*, 57-62, reproduction of texts and commentaries by Duthoy, *Taurobolium*, p. 54ff. and by M. Le Glay, *La religion romaine*, Paris 1971, p. 323ff. See also Briem, *Mystères*, p. 291ff.

"There they place the animal to be sacrificed. Then they tear open its breast with blows of the sacral knife. The huge wound vomits a flood of blood.. and a warm torrent.. runs into the trench.. through the thousand slits in the wood. The priest confined in the trench receives the blood. He offers his head to every drop that falls, he exposes his robes and his whole body to be stained. Even more, he turns the back of his head, offers his cheeks to this rainfall, exposes his ears, presents his lips and his nostrils, he floods even his eyes with the liquid. He does not spare even his palate but moistens his tongue with black blood, till his whole person is impregnated with it."

Although Prudentius speaks only of the bull, there is no doubt that the ram was sacrificed at the same time too. Its blood had the same purificatory and regenerative properties. Often the man in the ditch drank the blood of these animals, so that it might also purify his internal organs.[13] The trench into which the man descended for this double blood-bath symbolized the entry into hell with his load of sin. The descent and emergence from the *fossa sanguinis* signified the death of an impure life and the rebirth of a new and happy life.[14] The trench was thus considered as a gate of communication between two worlds, terrestrial and chthonic, and the two animals were sacrificed in honour of the underworld deities.[15]

Quite a number of scholars who have studied this bloody ritual "suppose that the purpose of the ceremony was regeneration—at first physical, but later spiritual".[16] The sacrificed animals transferred with their blood their occult powers to the neophyte (*criotauroboliatus*). They purified him from the sins committed up to that moment and recalled him to a new bodily and spiritual life (*in*

---

[13] Cumont, *Relig. orient.* p. 51, n. 25.

[14] Oppermann, *PWRE* IX, col. 19. The day of the bath was called symbolically *natalicium*. This new life after the baptism is reflected in the expressions used by taurobolic inscriptions (cf. *CIL* VI, 510 = *ILS* 4152 = Vermaseren *CIMRM* I, 520 = Duthoy, *op. cit.*, no. 23: "*taurobolio criobolioque in aeternum renatus*"). See again: Graillot, *Cybèle*, pp. 156ff., 172; Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 64, Duthoy, *op. cit.*, p. 106ff. and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 65.

[15] Graillot, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

[16] Duthoy, *Taurobolium*, p. 105ff. with the bibliography of the problem.

*aeternum renatus*). The blood of the ram was supposed to have the same regenerative and magical qualities as that of the bull. In the cult of the Danubian Riders priority must have been given to the blood of the ram and not to that of the bull which only took second place.

Ochsenschlager, in examining the *criobolium* scene on some of the Pannonian lead plaques, correctly interprets the tree from which the ram is hung as an *arbor vitae*. According to him, all the scenes which follow this act "symbolize the reincarnation of the soul in other forms of life, a form of apotheosis".[17]

The *crio-taurobolium* was not introduced on to the Danubian plaques (Class B), until later, that is from the moment when the Goddess began to be assimilated with Cybele, Anaitis (Anahita), and Artemis Tauropolos, whose practices also envisaged the purification by blood. This late dating is also attested by the fact that the first precise reference to the *taurobolium* in the cult of Cybele dates from the second century A.D. and that of the *criobolium* is still later.[18]

As I have already shown above, the ram was the sacred animal of the Danubian Riders, while the bull must be assigned to the Goddess—an attribution which she owed to her contact with the cult of the goddesses Cybele-Artemis-Luna, etc. As in Mithraic doctrine which consecrated the ram to Attis and the bull to Cybele (called also *Magna Mater*),[19] the Danubian Rider cult adopted a similar assignment of the two animals. It must be remembered that in the Phrygian mysteries, the *tauro-criobolium* was practised also by women.[20] That is why it may well be that in the Danubian Rider cult too it was not absolutely confined to the men. Women could perhaps be admitted as well because the principal divinity of the cult was a Great Goddess.

---

[17] Ochsenschlager, *loc. cit.*; cf. also Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 396 (index).

[18] The first mention of the *taurobolium* is dated 7 Oct. 134 (cf. *CIL* X, 1596 = Duthoy, *op. cit.*, no. 50); that of the *criobolium* is A.D. 135 (in Asia Minor), cf. Cumont, *PWRE* IV, 2, col. 1718 and Duthoy, *op. cit.*, no. 1. The two rites are unknown in Mithraic cult, but they were practised in the mysteries of Cybele, Mâ-Bellona, Dea Caelestis, etc. see Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 334 and Toutain, *Cult. païens*, I, p. 138.

[19] Graillot, *Cybèle*, p. 178.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

The adoption of the *criobolium* in the occult practices of the Danubian religion must have been due to the cult of Cybele, from which it was undoubtedly borrowed.[21] It may be that this practise was rounded off with others, owing to various influences (*Dea Syria*, Artemis, etc.).

"A central importance" is attributed by Ochsenschlager to the practice of the *criobolium* in the whole of the register comprising "the human mechanism", in other words the series of scenes reproducing the different moments of initiation. He considered that in this register we must "read from right to left, indicating that the *criobolium* is the culminating rite of the initiation."[22]

For my part, I cannot accept as natural this reversal of the scenic order proposed by the American scholar. I think we must read these images in the order in which they are presented on the Pannonian lead plaques—from left to right. The culminating moment in oriental initiation ceremonies really consisted in the mystical banquet given to the initiates, as we also see, moreover, in the Danubian Rider myth. The participants in the mysteries undoubtedly had to imitate, with due regard to their chronological order, the acts of the divinities whom they worshipped. Any neophyte who knocked on the door of the building where his initiation was to take place—a subterranean edifice or *megara*—must submit first of all to a purification, and this he obtained by means of the *criobolium*. Not until this purification had been completed could he attain to the first degree of initiation in the mysteries, that of Aries, symbolized by the man in a ram's mask figured in proximity to the *criobolium* scene. He must subsequently pass other "ordeals", which we shall examine below, before being judged worthy of being enrolled in the *militia* of the Rider-Gods.

### 4. The *Occultatio*

The picture of the symbolic death of the initiate in the mysteries, called *occultatio*, is one of the most characteristic in the repertoire of the monuments dedicated to the Danubian Rider cult. It is frequently found on the Class B plaques (3, c; 18, c; 23, b; 25, c; 27, c; 28, c; 31, b(?); 32, b; 47, b; 50, c; 62, b; 63; 76, b; 82, b; 84; 95, b; 100, b; 118, b; 122, b; 154, b; 161, b; 175, b; 182, c; 184, b; 207). These 25 pieces, more or less clearly executed, are all of stone. The absence of certain details in the reproduction of this scene can be interpreted as due to the effacement in course of time of the painting which would once have completed the work.

---

[21] Tudor, *Das Altertum* VIII (1962), p. 240.

[22] Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 65.

The characteristic nucleus of the *occultatio* is constituted by the group of three men. In the middle, a man is kneeling on the bare ground (or on a block of stone), flanked by two "extras" who hold outstretched before him a large vertical object, certainly to be identified with a ram's skin. The person kneeling is a bare-headed man, but he could conceivably also be a woman. His companions are clothed in one case in Phrygian costume, dagger at hip (100, b). In most cases, Nemesis is seen to the left, her hand to her mouth, the cock beside her, perched on a stone, and the ram to her right (18, c; 23, b; 25, c; 28; 32, b; 50, c; 62, b; 63, b; 76, b; 95, b; 100, b; 118, b; 161, b; 175, b; 182, c; 207). On other pieces the "extras" of the sacral death scene are Nemesis and a bull (3, c). Instead of the ram's skin we may have its body, with Nemesis beside it and a dagger (13; 27, c; 47, b). Near by is the group of the column, the crater, the cock, and the ram (122, b; 184, b). A fragment from Tibiscum shows the scene of *occultatio* beside a tree. One of the attendants holding the ram's skin is seated on a stone and holds a weapon (a dagger?) in his other hand (23, b). In one case only, on a Dacian lead roundel, the ram's skin is reproduced on its own (48). The arrangement of the ram's skin in front of the kneeling person is such as to allow his face and knees to be seen. In no case can he be taken for a frog, as older commentators thought. To be noted is the dagger stuck in the ground near the kneeling man (47, b; 62, b), or worn at the hip or in the hands of the attendants holding the ram's skin (23, b; 100, b)—evidence of the sanguinary character of the scene.

The scene of the initiate's symbolic death was not always understood by the craftsmen, so that we can often reconstruct it only by analogy. Frequently the ram's skin is absent, the attendants appearing with both hands together, a clear indication that the picture must have been completed by painting, now effaced.

The credit for having identified and partly at least elucidated the ceremony called *occultatio* must go to M. Abramić.[23] It was he who saw in it a liturgical death, a simulation, likewise practised in the mysteries of other cults. His opinion was supported also by Rostovtseff,[24] who sought to widen this explanation. He interpreted these images as reproducing the moments of the Mazdaic mysteries called *occultatio* and *ostentatio* which preceded the attainment of the rank of *Cryphius*, according to Hieronymus' account.[25] By *occultatio* the initiate was symbolically reborn and completed his spiritual regeneration by *ostentatio*. This at least was Rostovtseff's opinion, who cited in support the appearance on the Danubian plaques of several other symbols specific to Mazdaism, the lion, the cock, the ram, and so on. Some reserves, however, must be expressed about this hypothesis, when we take account of the fact that the symbols mentioned, though widely current in quite a number of oriental cults, were rather weakly represented in Mithraic sculpture, which did not attach the same importance to them as the Danubian Rider cult.

Relying on a marble roundel brought to light at Apulum (3, c), Buday[26] thought that the kneeling *mystes* was clothed by the two attendants in the ram's skin, which would be proof of some influence by Egyptian mysteries. His mistake is made clear by the fact that on this monument, as in other cases (62, b; 84; 182, c; etc.), the kneeling man was dressed in his own clothes. The cause of Buday's mistake was the arrangement of the skin on the relief, leaving the initiate's face free.

There is no doubt that the scene of the sacral death formed part of a scenario of τά δρώμενα καὶ δεικνύμενα in use in mystery procedures. In course of this, the *mystes* was obliged to perform several acts of mystical and symbolical character. He was sharply confronted with scenes or objects of horror, in order to prove his self-control, his spiritual strength, and his physical resistance. His duty thus was not to give the least sign of φρίκη during these ordeals and subsequently to keep eternal σιωπή, never revealing to anyone what he had seen in these moments. It was precisely to emphasize the great secrecy and eternal silence prescribed that Nemesis is always represented near, and to the left of, the scene of *occultatio*, Nemesis the implacable, hand to mouth in the act of sealing men's lips.[27]

---

[23] Abramić, *ÖJh*, 1914, p. 101. He wrongly identified here the murder of a Cabirus as μίμησις of the δρώμενα of the divinity". The dagger planted in the earth is a symbol of the simulated death of the *mystes* (*ibid.*, p. 96). See also Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 269ff.

[24] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 11ff.

[25] Hieronymus, *Ad Laetam*, 107; Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 93, n. 9 and 94, n. 12, and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 303ff.

[26] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 136ff. wrongly identifies on the Apulum medallion (3, c) a "rocky landscape" related to the cults of the Cabiri! During the ceremony of the Eleusinian mysteries the priests covered the *mystes'* head with a cloth and then the initiate was seated on a chair covered with a ram's skin, cf. Briem, *Mystères*, p. 218.

The scene of the kneeling *mystes* before the ram's skin had great importance in the eyes of votaries. The kneeling position of the candidate (often on a block of stone) indicated the severity of the test to which he was being subjected. He must pass the ordeal with calmness and courage, and these alone could assure him redemption and access to new spiritual life. All the oriental mysteries contained such physical and spiritual ordeals.[28] The spiritual resistance of the candidate, his strength of soul, was tested by horrible nightmare visions—φάσματα.[29] The staging of these terrifying sights was organized in such a manner as to transport the subject from the height of horror to the greatest ecstasy of happiness and vice versa, conducting him in turn through the darkness of the underworld and the radiant places of heaven.[30] To achieve this the candidate in the Danubian Rider mysteries was covered with ram's skin by his two companions, to protect him with its sacred powers. The mystagogues of the oriental religions were considered (like the priests of the public imperial cult) as the servants of the gods, which is why they are seen on the Danubian plaques dressed in the costumes characteristic of the deities of the central picture and occupied with the different sacred tasks required of them during the celebration of the mysteries.

---

[27] Apuleius, *Metam.*, XI, 21; the priest gave notice, that the gates of the underworld and the guardianship of life are the goddess's head [Isis] and that the rites of initation approximate to a voluntary death (*voluntaria mors*) from which there is only a precarious hope of resurrection (*precaria salus*). During this act a profound silence was imposed, reinforced by the command to keep the secret of initiation, cf. G. Mensching, *Das heilige Schweigen*, Giessen 1926, p. 114ff., and Cumont, *Lux perpetua*, Paris 1949, p. 336ff. Flavius Josephus, *Bell. Jud.*, II, 8, 7 informs us that the Essenes maintained secrecy about their cult and their religious organization with the greatest care. For the bibliography of the problem see also: J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 2nd Edn., Cambridge, 1908, p. 39ff.; J. Pley, *De lanae in antiquorum ritibus usu*, Giessen 1911, p. 3ff.; L. Gernet-A. Boulanger, *Le génie grec dans la religion*, Paris 1923, pp. 74, 132, 219 and Cornelius I. M. J. Beek, *Pisciculi*, p. 41 (who is unaware of a great part of the literature on the Danubian Riders).

[28] Augustinus, *De civit. Dei*, X, 28, and the commentaries of Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 218. The sufferings of the neophytes in the Mithraic mysteries are shown in the paintings of the Mithraeum of Santa Maria di Capua Vetere, cf. Vermaseren, *CIMRM* I, 187-197, and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, passim. In the mysteries of Mithras nakedness was obligatory during initiation. To frighten the *mystes* his abdomen was touched with the point of a sword, cf. Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 110; *Mithriaca* I, *The Mithraeum at S. Maria Capua Vetere*, Leiden 1971.

The simulated death of the neophyte is attested by the presence beside him of the dagger plunged in the earth, as also by the chthonic symbols placed around this scene. Moreover, this symbolic death was practised in the initiation rituals of quite a number of ancient mysteries.[31] In the Mithraic mysteries the sword used on this occasion was one which had been steeped in the blood of a man who had died a violent death.[32] Its counterpart on the Danubian plaques was the dagger stuck in the ground or worn at the hip by the acolytes of the simulated death scene. Some mysteries also practised the symbolic interment of the initiate, who was buried up to his neck.[33] On the Danubian plaques this symbolic burial was simulated by covering the candidate with rams' skins.[34] Also, every time the ram's skin is reproduced on the bottom register of a relief, it indicates the ritual of symbolic interment, for the ram with its chthonic attributes was consecrated to the underworld deities. When instead of the skin alone the complete image of the ram is figured on the plaque, we have a variant, and in its neighbourhood will be found other elements of the *occultatio* (the cock, Nemesis, or even the dagger stuck in the earth). Very probably in this case the ram was slaughtered above the candidate, whose symbolic death was simulated by the real death of the animal. We are reminded of an analogous ritual of the *Dea Syria* described by Lucian.[35] He mentions in the practice of these mysteries the sacrifice of a ewe and a ram, killed and eaten in the course of a mystical agape by the initiates. The *mystes* stretched the animals' skin on the ground and kneeled upon it. The animal's head was transformed into a mask, used in the mystery ceremonial by initiates who had attained to the rank of *Aries*.

---

[29] Tertull., *De corona*, 15; *De praescrip. haeret.* 40; Lactantius, *Epist.* 23 and Justinus Martyr, *Apol.*, I, 21. This last author describes a monstrous and infernal spectacle staged for the *mystes* in semi-obscurity followed by a sudden flash of blinding light, symbolic and mystical, for which see Turchi, *Relig. mister.*, p. 74 and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, pp. 299, 307, 323.

[30] Apuleius, *Metam.*, XI, 23... "*nocte media vidi solem candido coruscantem lumine, deos inferos et deos superos, accessi coram et adoravi de proximo*"; cf. H. Dibelius, *Eine Isisweihe bei Apuleius*, Heidelberg, 1917, p. 5ff. The *mysterium tremendum* (dark halls, horrors, monsters, phantoms, fright, pain etc.) is well described by Briem, *Mystères*, p. 261ff.

[31] For the Mithraic mysteries: Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 69; *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 166; Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, p. 103, and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 294. Firmicus Maternus, *De err. prof. relig.*, 18, informs us about the mysteries of Attis.

[32] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 322. The sword can be seen in the paintings of Capua Vetere (see n. 28, above).

Practices of this kind in the mysteries of the Syrian female divinities offer an analogy with certain scenes on the Danubian reliefs, such as the *criobolium*, the sacrifice of a ram above a person kneeling on the ground, and so on. In cases where this sacrifice of the ram over a kneeling initiate really took place, the ritual is always a kind of *criobolium* combined with a symbolic death. It can thus be connected with "the mystery death which frees the candidate of his physical limitations so that he may encounter the Goddess who represents his own soul".[36]

---

[33] Allusions in Proculus, *Plat. theol.*, IV, 9. For the different theories see Dieterich, *op. cit.*, p. 163ff. The trench was also the image of death and resurrection, cf. Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 13.

[34] E. Samter, *Familienfeste der Griechen und Römer*, Berlin 1901, p. 35 and *Geburt, Hochzeit und Tod*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1911, *passim*.

[35] Lucianus, *De dea Syria*, 55-57; cf. the commentaries of Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 65.

[36] Ochsenschlager, *loc. cit.*, who gives as sources of information Plotinus, *Ennead.* I, 6, 8, and Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.*, 73, 2; Ochsenschlager (*op. cit.*, p. 63) also proposes a series of considerations concerning the mortal and immortal states of being, and their combining and separating according to the wisdom of the great mother and the mistress of life—which were ideas

After having tasted the pangs of death and returned to the light of life, the candidate, now initiated, was thought of as having identified himself with the redeeming divinity and thus achieved a spiritual rebirth.

### 5. *The Initiates and Degrees of the Mysteries*

Frequently the scenario of the Danubian plaques figures various personages, grouped or in isolation, during the different moments of initiation. They are seen either as actors in a given scene, or represented without any reference to the role they were required to play. The variety of the numerous postures in which they appear is evidence of the complexity of these long occult ceremonies. We note them as follows:

(a) An initiate is fishing before the tripod on which reposes the ram's head (cf. above p. 234).

(b) The *crio-taurobolium* in the presence of the *mystae* (cf. above, p. 237).

(c) A *mystes* stretches out his hand towards a crater in the presence of Nemesis (cf. above, p. 236).

(d) The *occultatio* scene (cf. above, p. 243).

(e) *Aries* wearing the mask conducted by the mystagogues (155, d; 157, d) or seated alone (195, c).

(f) A *mystes* bearing the lion's mask and the club of Heracles (100, b).

(g) *Mystae* of undetermined rank conducted by mystagogues (34, c).

(h) Two or three naked *mystae* conducted to the mystical banquet by a priest likewise naked (127, d; 132, d; 133, d; 135, c)

(i) The mystical banquet served to the initiates.

(j) Different figures of naked men (81, c; 179; 197, c).

(k) Gems engraved with the inscription *leo* (191, B; 192, B).

(l) *Miles* or *Aries* close to the *criobolium* and the table with the fish (146, C).

The usual number of persons figured in the different mystery scenes is three; also when a single *mystes* is present or two persons

---

too learned to be within reach of the humble worshippers of the Danubian Riders.

one of whom is a priest, we must suppose some abbreviation of the scene for lack of space.[37] Although the *mystai* of the plaques are reproduced as young men, it cannot be inferred from this that only young men had access to the mysteries. The bearded persons figured in the mystery scenes must be identified either with the mystagogues or with certain auxiliary priests.

There is no doubt that the initiation ceremonial required the presence of three persons, one of which was the *mystes* and the two others the priests directing the initiation. The first mystagogue is usually bearded. He walks in front. It is he who invites, hand outstretched towards the tripod with the fish or the table, to the mystic banquet. In several cases he conducts the *mystes* by the hand, which seems to indicate that the ceremonies were carried out in darkness or that the *mystes* at least had his eyes bandaged.

If candidates for the mysteries hesitated as they walked, this was not only because of darkness, but also because of fear. This is explicitly revealed to us by the wall paintings in the Mithraeum of Capua Vetere.[38] However, the *mystes* of the Danubian plaques was held by the hand and he stumbled as he walked above all because he had his eyes bandaged (*velatis oculis*), a common custom in occult ceremonies, marking the moments when certain secrets were revealed.[39]

The fact that the principal mystagogue together with his helper are represented naked is explained by the idea (common to many oriental mysteries) that the removal of clothes was equivalent to the stripring off of all sins, bodily and spiritual. This was an important concept in the pagan cults which was later to pass on into Christianity.[40]

---

[37] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 10. Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 247, was the first to distinguish priests and *mystae* in the initiation scenes.

[38] Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 187; 188; 191; 194 etc., and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 291ff.

[39] Pseudo Augustinus, *Quaest. vet. et novi Testam.*, in Migne, *Patrol. lat.* XXXIV, 4, col. 2214, and Ambrosiaster, *Comm. in epist. ad Ephes.*, V, 8, in Migne, *op. cit.*, XVII, col. 396. The *mystae* are also represented *velatis oculis* on the paintings of Capua Vetere, cf. Vermaseren, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

[40] Heckenbach, *De nuditate sacra sacrisque vinculis*, Giessen 1911, p. 8ff. —other examples in Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 10ff., and pl. VI, and Cumont, *Lux perpetua*, p. 423.

It was only after having passed with success through the ordeals of initiation and having been received into the *militia Equitum Danuvinorum* by attaining to the first rank (that of *Aries*) that the initiates could partake of the lay banquet (which was also of course mystic and sacral). As for the divine banquet, at which the three guests were the three principal deities of the myth, it was Sol who organized it in the celestial regions. The cloistral or lay banquet could be symbolized simply by the tripod with the fish on it, though this did not mean that the initiate could join it except under escort by the priest. The entry of the initiate into the *militia* of the three Danubian deities is reproduced clearly enough on a relief from Poetovio (155, b) on which are represented three persons in military uniform.

The question of the ranks in the Danubian Rider mysteries has occasioned many controversies among scholars.[41] Today it seems to have been entirely cleared up thanks to monuments recently discovered. The question can be put in three ways: what was the number of degrees of initiation, what was the name of each rank, and what was their hierarchical order of succession?

We remember to start with that the influence of the Mithras cult on the Danubian plaques was very powerful. All the same, it did not succeed in transferring to the Danubian Rider mysteries its seven degrees. It is well known that Mazdaism revered the number 7 as sacred. Hence the Mithraic reliefs usually contain seven altars, seven Phrygian caps, seven trees, and so on.[42] By contrast, the symbols or cult objects represented on the Danubian plaques are only very rarely grouped in sevens. In fact, we have seven loaves or fruits in one case (81, c) and seven amphoras in another (194, A, b). On these plaques it is the number three which takes first place. We find it again and again, beginning with the three divinities of the principal scene, the three busts of the triad, the three guests at the banquet, the three *mystae*, the three vases, the three lamps, the three branched candlesticks, the three loaves, the three apples, and so on. The frequency of this number 3 indicates the importance attached to it in the public cult, as well as among the symbols and in the practice of the mysteries. As I said, the number 7 in the Mithras cult, expressed many times in different symbols, imposed seven ranks or degrees of initiation on its mysteries. In the same way in the Danubian Rider cult the number 3 decided the number of degrees of initiation, revealed by the manner in which the symbols are grouped.

---

[41] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 64, under the influence of the Mithras mysteries identified seven degrees of initiation in the Danubian Rider cult: the Lion, the Raven, the Persian, the Eagle, the Soldier, the Bull, and the Ram. Hülsen, *MdI*, 1889, p. 316ff. also recognized seven degrees, of which only one was certain: the Lion (192, B). Hampel, *BpRég.*, 1904, p. 41, and *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 344ff., declared for three degrees: the Lion, the Soldier, and the Ram, also accepted by Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 15. Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 13, recognized two: Cryphius and Aries. Tudor, *ED* VII, p. 274ff., and *Das Altertum*, 1962, p. 242, proposed three degrees, of which *Aries* and *Leo* were certain.

[42] Cumont *MMM* I, p. 119 and *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 155; Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, pp. 69ff., and 149ff., and Rostovtseff, *Röm. Mitt.* 1934, p. 183ff. The Mithraic initiation degrees were: *Corax* (*Corvus*), *Nymphos* (*Cryphios*?), *Stratiotes* (*Miles*), *Leon* (*Leo*), *Perses*, *Heliodromus*, and *Pater*; cf. Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 115 et Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 303.

Very probably this number 3 was adopted under the influence of the mysteries of Cybele, where also there were three degrees of initiation and a principal female deity. Each degree of initiation in the ancient mysteries involved a special costume and mask during their ceremonial. In trying to sort them out on the Danubian plaques, we have succeeded in confirming the sacred number 3. The most frequent of these representations is that of the man with a ram's mask over his face, whom we call *Aries*. In most cases *Aries*, dressed in a short tunic, is represented upright, next to the *criobolium* scene (127, d; 132, d; 133, d; 135, c; 173, b). There are also cases in which, dressed in tunic and chlamys, he is placed beside Nemesis and next to the grid and the sieve, objects used in the practice of the *criobolium* (195, c). In another case, *Aries* is held by the hand by a person who can only be a mystagogue. He stretches out his other hand towards the tripod bearing a loaf(?) (157, b). Altogether on its own, I think, is the representation on a bronze plaque of Class A. The Rider's attendant (a bearded personage with a Phrygian cap and a tunic) raises in his right hand a ram's head while in the other he holds that of a man (174, b). It is difficult to imagine that this could still be a mask prepared for some *Aries*, since at the time when there were still monuments with a single Rider, the mysteries of the cult had not yet been organized. Moreover, the human mask rather resembles a skull.

Finally a Poetovio relief (155, d) offers us one of the most interesting documents regarding the different degrees of initiation. We see, beside the *criobolium* and the table loaded with food, three men dressed in tunics and each bearing a shield in his left hand, with his right hand folded across his heart. They are thus represented in a soldierly posture. The first wears a beard, so that he may be identified with a mystagogue, the second has his face covered with the ram's mask—and is thus no doubt an *Aries*, while the third unfortunately cannot be identified because the relief has been damaged around his head. But there is little doubt that he too must have been wearing a mask, representing a rank in the mysteries (*Miles*? *Leo*?). Thus this picture shows the *militia Equitum Danuvinorum* as they must have appeared in the mystery ceremonies. The fact that the masked man appears regularly next to the *criobolium* scene or in company with various objects linked with its practice clearly proves the correlation between these pictures. The presence of *Aries* by the *criobolium* shows that this rank was obtained after the purification by blood-bath and that it represented the first of the three prescribed degrees of initiation. Given the importance of the ram in our cult, it is evident why the first degree of initiation in its mysteries was called *Aries*.[43] Moreover, similar names appear also in the Mithraic mysteries (*Corax*, *Leo*) pertaining to animals sacred to the cult. In this order of ideas, it is very probable that when the ram's head is figured separately on some of the Danubian plaques it represents a mask as an object used in the mysteries.

The second degree of initiation was that of *Miles*, known likewise from Mithraic practice.[44] Its identification on the Danubian reliefs was first made possible by the Poetovio piece, of which I have just spoken (155, d), where the soldier with the damaged head can only represent this degree. The identification is still better borne out by the tablet recently found at Hrtkovć (146, C). On this piece, beside the scene of the *criobolium* is a soldier holding a spear diagonally, with its point upward facing right. On his right is a naked man with his arm extended towards the scene. In fact we see here two degrees represented. The first man, next to the *criobolium*—although his head is not very well carved—can be identified with *Aries*, while the armed soldier represents the *Miles*, the next rank higher in the hierarchy. In the Danubian Rider mysteries the rank of *Miles*, protegé of Mars, must undoubtedly have been calculated to attract soldiers to their practice.[45]

---

[43] Antonescu, *Cabirii*, p. 242, was of the opinion that the man skinning the ram was looking for *auspicia*, while the one wearing the animal's mask was to be identified with Anubis. But all the other authors have here identified the *criobolium* and *Aries* (a degree of initiation) for which the ram's blood was being collected; cf. Nowotny, *WMBH* IV (1896), p. 290; Hampel, *BpRég*, 1904, p. 44; *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 346; Abramić, *ÖJh* XCII (1914), Beibl. p. 100; Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 9, and Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 134. Dölger, *IXΘYC* II, p. 429 also identified *Aries* on mon. 155, d; but Abramić, *loc. cit.*, favoured a priest and two *mystae*. But he was wrong in seeing Hermes in the man carrying the ram's mask and attributing to this god the role of conductor of the initiate to the banquet.

For the third degree of initiation, conferring the rank of *Leo* (*Leon*), the Danubian plaques provide an adequate number of sculptural and epigraphic elements. This third rank is also familiar, being likewise known in the Mithraic mysteries. Its adoption by the mysteries of the Danubian cult is no doubt due to the important place occupied by the king of beasts in several oriental cults. We see, on a relief found in all probability at Barboşi or Troesmis (100, b), a man wearing a cloak, with a lion's mask on his head, armed with a club held in his right hand and resting on the ground. He can only be a *mystes* called *Leo* from the mask he wears. The club he holds in his hand recalls Heracles, the slayer of the Nemean lion. Like the *Miles* who appears in the mystery ceremonies armed with spear and shield, *Leo* is figured with the club of Heracles. The mask—symbolic attribute as well as element of costume specific to a certain rank—was used in a number of mysteries. This is sufficiently attested by the various literary, epigraphical, and archaeological sources.[46]

Further evidence about the degree of *Leo-Leon* is provided by two engraved gems. One of these bears on its reverse the image of a lion in full charge towards the right. The engraved image is surrounded by the inscription λέων in capital letters (192, B) On the reverse of the other piece is engraved the same scene (191, B), with the addition of a star and a lunar crescent above the image of the lion. Below it, the puzzling inscription could very well signify in the occult writing of the Danubian mysteries the same name *leo* or *leon*. Both these pieces could have served (besides their magical and prophylactic virtues) as *tesserae*, in other words tokens of recognition which the votaries were obliged to wear on their persons during the occult ceremonies.

---

[44] Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 307.

[45] Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 26.

[46] Porphyrius, *De abst.*, IX, 16. The costumes of the Mithraic degrees are definite on the Konjić bas-relief (cf. Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 1896; Cumont, *MMM* I, 171; Turchi, *Relig.mist.*, p. 200, and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 320.

These grades in the hierarchy peculiar to the mysteries of the Danubian Rider cult may symbolize—like those of the Mithraic mysteries[47]—a "notion of nature as a fiery force of substance" (*Miles*) and a "physical force" (*Leo*). *Krios-Aries*, on the other hand, symbolized the spring equinox. Each of these three grades are placed under the protection of one of the planets.

Finally, on four monuments (9, b; 45, b; 46; 174, b) the attendants hold in their hands masks of a sort which could be considered anthropomorphic. But their poor execution, artistically speaking, makes it impossible to be certain. The hypothesis of a *Cryphius* degree in the occult hierarchy of the Danubian mysteries proposed by Rostovtseff[48] is not supported by any evidence on the plaques so far known.

## 6. *The Mystical Banquet of Initiates*

The series of tests to which the initiate must submit ended in a sacred banquet, a custom familiar in all the cults endowed with mysteries. Numerous eschatological beliefs were attached to this mystical agape. Its guests, of course, could only be the initiates who had successfully passed the tests to which the mystagogues had subjected them.

It was not to be expected, therefore, that the banquet scene would be missing from the Danubian plaques. It is reproduced in fact only on Class B monuments and especially on the Pannonian lead plaques. But this agape of initiates was a simulation of the divine banquet served to the three principal deities of the myth in the celestial regions after their victory. Thus the two banquets must not be confused, one being purely divine, the other mystical but human. This explains why the scene representing this second banquet is always situated in the bottom register of the relief, that reserved for the images of initiation and the chthonic symbols.

---

[47] Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 68ff.

[48] Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 10.

A simplified form of this banquet may be suggested to us by the tripod with the fish or the ram's head, situated on its own in the lower part of certain plaques (1, c; 29, d; 34, d; 42, c; 71, b; 72, e; 81, c; 88, c; 106, c; 113, c; 114, b; 137, d; 157, b; 174, c; 177, b; 183, c; 190, b; 191, A, c; 192, A, c; 194, A, c; 200, c; 204, c; 228, A, c). But when the table in question is loaded with food, fish, ram's meat, loaves, fruits, and so on, and when an amphora is placed under the table and Nemesis is found near by, then there cannot be a shadow of doubt that it really is the banquet served to the initiates (7, b; 155, d; 173, b). Of course, this sort of mystical banquet for the initiates followed the ritual of the sacred banquet served to the gods, as it appears on the relief from Apulum (7, b). We see there in the middle the table with the fish watched over by Nemesis. An attendant with a fish in his arms approaches from the right. To the left, another acolyte brings the ram's head or a loaf, and on the right there are also three cups.

On two engraved gems showing the same scene (195; 196, b) the banquet of initiates takes place according to the rules of the Roman *triclinia*. Three persons rest on the cushions of a *lectus triclinaris* with splayed back. They stretch their hands out to the right to partake of a fish situated outside the banqueting couch. The two persons placed on the outside each bears a sceptre. Before the *lectus* stands a small tripod, flanked by the snake and the cock. A *cista mystica*, a crater, and a sphinx surround the *lectus triclinaris*.

An entirely classical arrangement of the banquet seems to me that reproduced on four types of Pannonian lead plaques (127, d; 132, d; 133, d; 135, c). In the middle, a circular table, covered with an ample cloth; on the table a plate with a fish. Three people, all young, have taken their places at the table, their arms outstretched towards the fish (127, d; 132, d). In two cases one of these people holds a cup in his hand (132, d; 133, d). Two young naked men are approaching the table from the right. The first with a beckoning hand invites his companion to take his place at table. Preceding the scene of the banquet, on the left, there is the *criobolium* scene performed in the presence of an *Aries*.

Even more precise and interesting is the banquet scene on the series of plaques of Divos type (135, c). The table has a similar aspect but the guests this time are three, two young people stretching out their hands towards the fish and a woman in the middle. The woman raises her right arm over her head (ritual gesture?) and with her left hand lifts a cup to the level of her heart. Three naked persons approach from the right. The first, the right hand outstretched towards the table, invites the others. On the other side of the picture is the same *criobolium* scene.

On this series of plaques, too, we find the *mensa tricliniaria* of Roman type. The guests rest on litters in the *triclinium*. It is, moreover, a mistake to assert, as some investigators have done, that the three guests have taken their places at table in the manner of the early Christians.[49] Moreover, the origin of this banquet and the identification of its guests have given rise to a number of unfounded suppositions. The fault lies in the indirect nature of the information relied on by the specialists concerned, who did not study the monuments themselves but confined themselves to the use of photographs and other unsatisfactory reproductions.[50]

As we know, the banquet scene expressed the final moment of every occult ceremonial of mystery type. It follows that its appearance on a monument marks the end of the ceremony of initiation, and concludes the scenario of secret practices.[51] If the banquet only has three guests, it is because it is modelled on the divine banquet in which only the three victorious deities took part. The presence of a female personage at the agape of initiates may prefigure the functions of the Goddess at the divine banquet over which she presided, but it may at the same time be evidence that a priestess was possibly called in to organize the agape. At this agape the fish dedicated to the Goddess and the flesh of the ram, the animal sacred to the two gods, was eaten and cups were drunk, such as we see placed before the guests on the Class C plaques also. The participants in the banquet approach, quite naked, coming from the right, but once installed at table they are clothed in ceremonial robes. The young people arrive escorted by priests, likewise naked, as was no doubt required by the ceremonies preceding the banquet. It would be the priests who with outstretched hands show them their place at table. The presence of a woman presiding over the banquet allows the hypothesis that women could take part in the mysteries of the Danubian Rider cult, a thing they were forbidden to do in the occult practices of the Mithras religion.[52]

---

[49] Ziehen's statement (*AA*, 1904, p. 15) concerning the participation in the banquet of three persons each having his own seat is wrong. All three are seated on a common couch in the form of a half-moon.

[50] Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 346, saw these as young priests under instruction before initiation; Dölger, *ΙΧΘΥC* I, p. 148, denied any artistic or religious connection between the banquet represented on the Mithraic bas-reliefs and the Danubian plaques. According to Buday, *DolgSzeged* 1928, p. 123, one engraved gem (195, b) shows us a banquet "of Egyptian type". Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 9ff., is in favour of a Mithraic origin for the banquet on the Danubian tablets, during which he thinks that an officiating personage is offering communion to two young participants.

The organization of the banquet (except for the fish) followed the course known from Mithraic reliefs, where the guests likewise drank from a cup or rhyton.[53] All the same, from an artistic point of view the banquet of the Danubian plaques is much more gracefully rendered. The artist contrives a free space in front of the three guests, so that the dishes deposited on the table may be shown. This space cannot be interpreted, as Buday thought,[54] as places reserved for the young men approaching the table, since the guests are already seated around it. The communion reproduced on the plaques mentioned consists of fish in all its purity and a ritual drink which must have been wine. The moment of holy communion of the Goddess with a single Rider appears already on the earliest Class A plaques in the central scene of the myth.[55] In one case (45, b) the Rider is shown offering the Goddess a rhyton, which she receives with open arms. The absence on this bronze (lost today) of the man trampled by the horse's feet could conceivably be explained also in another way. It is possible that the artist simply preferred to reproduce there, instead of the victory scene of the Rider and his fallen enemy, the more peaceful one of the final communion feasting the god's triumph.

---

[51] In the Mithriaic mysteries "all grades probably partook of the meal, but, since they did not share equally in the liturgy, they may not have shared equally in the meal". This is the opinion of Jevry Stewardson-Ernest Saunders, in Samuel Laeuchli, *Mithraism in Ostia, Mystery Religion and Christianity in the Seaport of Rome*, Illinois 1967, p. 84.

[52] Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 134.

[53] Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, p. 410 (index); Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 174ff; *RA*, 1902, p. 13ff, and *Relig. orient.*, pp. 51, 258, n. 33. See also Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, p. 100ff; Campbell *MithrIcon*, p. 316ff. and Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 61ff. In the mysteries of Mithras it seems that the banquet was not so important as in other mystery cults.

[54] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 134.

The case is the same with the *mystes* taking part in the agape after having passed with success the initiation tests to which the mystagogues had subjected him. He had the right to consider himself quite as victorious as the three Danubian deities invited by Sol to the divine banquet. The *criobolium* and the *taurobolium* had previously purified the *mystes* of his sins and conferred on him the first degree of initiation, that of *Aries*. The two next degrees, *Miles* and *Leo*, were still to come. Now, at the banqueting table, eating the sacred food (the fish) and the drink reserved for the gods, he must have felt himself physically and spiritually quite regenerated.

Just as in all occult mystery ceremonies the moment of the banquet must likewise have been the most solemn in the whole Danubian Rider cult. As the culminating moment of initiation this solemnity had an altogether special symbolic value, capable of strongly affecting the naive spirits of the faithful.[56] The promotion to a higher degree of initiation was linked with admission to the banquet and the sacred meal constituted for the *mystes* a guarantee of immortality in heaven. To take part in this banquet, organized on the model of that served to the gods, thus signified for the *mystes* communion and fusion with the divine essence of the gods. Mystical powers were conferred on him assuring him of immortality in the world to come. This mystical communion took place, first on the divine plane among the three deities themselves, then on the human level between the three deities and the *mystes*.[57] According to a custom known from other mystical banquets, the drink taken on this occasion was composed of liquids considered pure. Besides the wine (indicated by the presence of amphoras and craters), oil, milk, and honey must also have been mixed in with it.[58] Finally, a whole series of accessories were used at these banquets, vases, lamps, loaves, fruits, and so on.[59] such as we frequently find on the Danubian plaques figuring on the table in threes. But even when in the

---

[55] There is none on mon. 46 (as wrongly stated by Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 17), but it is definite on mon. 45, b, where the Rider really is holding the rhyton.

[56] For the Cybele cult: Firm Maternus, *De error. prof. relig.*, XVIII; Clem. of Alexandria, *Protreptikos* II, 15. Cf. also Graillot, *Cybèle*, p. 180ff.; Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, p. 103; Turchi, *Relig. mister.*, p. 145ff. and Cumont, *Lux perpetua*, p. 272. For the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, see: *CIL* III, 4782; VI, 30931; X, 696; and Merlat, *JupDol.*, p. 16ff., 115, 206, 260, 331. In the mysteries of Samothrace the banquet is not certain (Chapouthier, *RÉA*, 1939, p. 68, n. 1); but it is well known in the Sabazius cult, cf. Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 61. In the paintings of the Pretextat catacombs (cf. Cumont, *op. cit.*, fig. 3) an *angelus bonus* conducts Vibia towards the holy table, reserved

---

for the blessed. As a participant in the sacred banquet Vibia eats a fish. Some of the guests at the banquet hold their hand over their head, performing a ritual gesture, such as can be seen in the same manner on a Danubian plaque from Pannonia (135, c). At the Mithraic banquet bull's meat was eaten, cf. Briem, *Mystères*, p. 315ff., and Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 81.

[57] Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, p. 95ff., explains the mystical connections of the banquets. See also Cumont, *Lux perpetua*, p. 237ff.

[58] Usener, *Rhein. Mus.*, LVIII (1902), p. 177ff. Honey was consumed also at the banquets of the Mithraic and Great Mother mysteries (Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 230, Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 141ff., and Graillot, *Cybèle*, p. 81). At the mysteries of *Venus Caelestis* the beverage called *promulsidaria* was drunk (*CIL* X, 1598) and at Eleusis the famous *kykeon*, cf. Foucart, *Myst. Eleusis*, p. 378; Briem, *Mystères*, p. 259, and Cumont, *Lux perpetua*, p. 418, n. 1.

[59] Clem. Alex., *op. cit.*, II, 22, and Athenaeus, XI, 1, mention the consumption of fruits at the mystery meals. In the Mithraic mysteries there were sacrifices of bread and water (Tertull., *De praeser. haeret.*, XL; *Apol.*, 16; *Adv. nat.*, 13 and Justin Martyr. *Apol.*, I, 66); Clem. Alex, *loc. cit.*, and Arnobius, *Adv. nat.*, V, 26, mention the bread in baskets eaten at the Eleusinian mysteries (see also Foucart, *loc. cit.*). On the Konjić bas-relief (Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 1896) the loaves and fruits are similar to those carved on the Ratiaria relief (71, b). Justin Martyr (*loc. cit.* and *Dial. Tryph.*, 70) informs us that the neophyte after having pronounced the sacred formulae received for his meal a loaf and a cup of water. In the Mithraic mysteries the bread and wine replaced at the sacred banquet the meat and blood of the ram (Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 43). Concerning the foods used in mystery meals, see in general Dieterich, *Mithraslit.*, p. 170 ff.

neighbourhood of these articles there is no trace of a banquet, they undoubtedly represent an allusion to it, indicated by their number, corresponding to the number of guests, whether in the case of the celestial triad or the trio of those invited to the human banquet. Thus when there are three cups or various foods reposing on the tripod we must always see an allusion to the banquet in that fact, without taking any account of the presence or absence of men in their immediate vicinity.

In eating the sacred fish of the Goddess, the *mystes* drives the demons from his body. His soul joins in a mystical fusion with the Goddess and receives from it the occult powers attributed to the animal whose flesh he has just eaten. After the banquet he was reborn to a new life, ready to fight Evil at any moment to assure himself of a glorious immortality. It was the priests, the mystagogues who, by their unrivalled talent as stage directors, breathed this mystical force into the *mystes*. Their eschatological promises, familiar in all the mystery cults of the Orient, attracted superstitious souls frightened by the tortures of Hell. The Danubian Rider mysteries must have had their share of these manipulations by priestly charlatans.[60] In proportion as the military and economic crisis became more acute on the Middle and Lower Danube and the masses became prey to the exploitation of their own ignorance, the proliferation of speculative and naive beliefs intensified. The Danubian Rider mysteries radiated also into other analogous religions.

A good mystical definition of the banquet scene is due to Ochsenschlager;[61] "the table and its contents.. symbolize the purity necessary for true perceptivity.. that the purity of the soul was largely regarded as a matter of diet and perceptivity was apparently regarded as a matter of a power of physical being and not of immaterial soul or mind."

---

[60] Dieterich, *op. cit.*, p. 100ff. and 170ff. Regarding the immortality conferred by the sacred banquet at the mysteries, see Cumont, *After-life in Roman Paganism*, New Haven, 1922, p. 166ff.; *Relig. orient.*, p. 38, n. 58; *Lux perpetua*, p. 115; Bornhausen, *Der Erlöser*, Lipsca, 1927, *passim*; Eitrem, *Symb. Osl.*, V (1926), p. 39ff.; Dornseiff. *PWRE* II, 3, col. 1211f. and L. *Bouyer*, "Le salut dans les religions à mystères, *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 27 (1923), p. 1ff. (inaccessible). During the meal at the Metroac mysteries, Firm. Maternus, *op. cit.*, XVIII, and Clem. Alex., *Protrept.*, II, 21, 2, inform us that the *mystes* pronounced the sacred formula: "I have fasted, I have drunk the mixed drink (*kykeon*), I have taken from the casket, I have worked it, then I have put it in the basket and from the basket into the casket."

[61] Ochsenschlager, *Sirmium* II, p. 61.

By the rich and varied content of its repertoire, the Danubian Rider cult and its mysteries must rank high among practices of their kind. During the first period, that of the worship of a single Rider, there could not have been any organized mysteries possessing a well defined liturgy. At this period, the votaries must have confined themselves to certain occult practices, such as that we have called the "fishing". In the following phase of its evolution, owing to its contacts with various mystery religions, the Danubian Rider cult underwent a considerable development of its own mysteries. The examination of these mystery scenes, their degrees of initiation, and the cult objects reveals the significant contribution made to the organization of the Danubian mysteries by the cults of Cybele and Mithras. This contribution was of course completed by other influences, but it would be difficult to say what they were from a mere reading of the sculptural repertoire. The mysteries of Cybele contributed, with the practice of the *criotaurobolium,* the number of degrees of initiation and the symbolism of the number 3. From their side, the Mithraic mysteries influenced the rhythm with which the ritual proceeded, the practice of the divine banquet and the agape of initiates, and so on. The Danubian plaques, in comparison with other cultic reliefs, contain a regular storehouse of scenes, symbols, ritual objects. Grouped in threes according to a certain order along the different registers, they were all the more accessible to the believer, who by means of this display was able to reach a perfect understanding of the whole. The liturgical breadth and complexity of the Danubian mysteries shows itself in the great number of cultic properties figured often on their own, as sacred objects.

## 7. *The Various Symbolic and Cult Objects*

As I have many times emphasized in the course of this book, compared with the reliefs emanating from other cults, the Danubian plaques stand out by the great richness and variety of their repertoire of objects and their complexity of meaning. Some of these objects express symbols, while others have a liturgical character. But in both cases they are sacred objects, and this it is which caused the artist to reproduce them, especially in the lower registers. Most of them were used in the course of the liturgy of the mysteries. Sacred objects of this kind (τὰ ἱερὰ) were kept in a basket-shaped box closed by a lid (κάλαθος) or in a *kibotos*, a "wooden coffer" that we see on an engraved gem (195, b). As in the practice of other secret cults, these objects were entrusted to the care of a sacred keeper (παναγής). I think it will be useful to describe these objects, in alphabetic order, trying in each case to find an explanation for them.

The ALTAR is frequent in the repertoire of the Class A and B monuments. On the Class A reliefs, it accompanies the scene of the ram sacrifice (9, c; 14; 16, c; 20, b; 29, d; 55, c; 203, c). Sometimes we find also the symbolic number of *three* altars (40; 41, d; 72, d) and in one case even four altars in the same register (42, c). Very interesting to note is the scene of the man sacrificing on an altar facing a *cista mystica* imitating a temple (34, d). But the outline of the altar is also reproduced in some cases to recall its function as an object attached to the ceremony of sacrifice (26, c; 83, c; 85, b; 86, b; 104, b; 154, b; 176, c). It goes without saying that in the general plan of cult buildings dedicated to these three deities there must have been three fixed altars, to receive the prescribed sacrifices and libations. The altar is never associated with the symbolic group of the Elements, which would have allowed us to interpret it as an emblem of fire.

The AMPHORA appears among the various forms of receptacle used in the practices of the cult. In most cases it occurs in places and situations not pointing to any special conclusions (41, d; 47, d; 48, c; 55, c; 57, b; 120, b; 193, A, c, B; 208, e). Interesting is the double representation of this vase under the banqueting table (173, b) or its seven-fold representation (194, A, b). This characteristically shaped receptacle was used to keep wine, honey, or other liquids required for the performance of ritual ceremonies and mystical banquets. Despite its simple function as a receptacle, it was always a sacred object, like the liquids it contained.

The APPLES, in view of their circular form, are often confused with loaves or other objects (42, c; 59, b; 64, b; 77; 173, b; 227, c).[62] Their identification is assured in only one case, a stone relief where the three apples are seen in perfect outline beside three loaves (71, b). Apples were among the foods served at the sacred banquet and must be included in the list of sacred objects. It is probable that each guest at the banquet had in front of him a fish, a loaf, an apple, and a cup of drink, the whole constituting the pure and holy meal. Besides this, like the loaves, the apples, with other kinds of fruit, had their use in various occult practices.

The BLOCKS, roughly cut with four sides, had various functions: as an altar, as a base on which certain symbols were deposited, or as a seat for various personages (23, b; 29, d; 86, b; 118, b; 177, b; 183, c). As was only proper, in the sanctuary complex (especially when used for occult rituals) these objects must necessarily be regarded as sacred.

The BOW is preeminently Sol's weapon, but undoubtedly the Danubian Riders could use it too, although it is never seen in their hands. On a lead plaque from Romula, Sol bears his bow and quiver filled with arrows on his back (34, b). The bow appears on its own on a relief from Almus (71, b). In two cases (193, B; 197, b), on engraved gems, the bow is stylized to represent the outline of a snake (the bowstring attaches the reptile's mouth to its tail). The bow, in Mithraic cult, as the preferred weapon of Mithras, symbolized the enemy of Evil.[63]

The BRACAE, an article of clothing borrowed from the Barbarians, was frequently worn by Mithras and his attendants. The Danubian Riders, on the other hand, are never shown wearing trousers. In one case only, they are worn by a personage in the *occultatio* scene (100, b).

The BRANCH appears only twice (37, d; 197, a), crowning a cult scene or an array of symbols. In this case it must symbolize the *arbor vitae* of the *criobolium* picture. But conceivably also it could be interpreted as a mere piece of ornament.

---

[62] Buday, *DolgSzeged*, 1928, p. 136, wrongly identifies the ring-shaped loaves with the chains (manacles) used in the Cabiric mysteries. Cf. also Kern, *PWRE* X, col. 1429.

[63] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 183, and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 252ff.

The CADUCEUS also appears only once (46). It was, as we know, the symbol of Mercury, to whom the ram and the cock could equally well be attributed as sacred animals. These two animals were also sacred in Mithraic cult,[64] and also in the cults of other divinities of the Graeco-Roman pantheon. The role of Hermes-Mercury in the Danubian Rider cult is easily explained by the fact that this god was the psychopomp and protector of magic. As conductor of souls into the domain of Hades, Mercury had his rightful place in all mystery cults practising the magical symbolic death and promising resurrection.[65] It is he who is the guide of Vibia towards the table of the blessed in the paintings of Pretetat.[66] His association with the cult of the Danubian Riders is also to be explained by the fact that these deities had certain chthonian attributes.

The CANDELABRUM does not appear on the Class A plaques. It follows that it was only adopted from the moment when the practice of mysteries had been regularly organized, since they had to be held in dark places (*megara*). Usually it is figured in the lower registers of the plaques, in view of the nocturnal and secret character of the mysteries.[67] In one case only, the candelabrum is reproduced behind a Rider in place of the attendant. It is there represented as a column supported on two feet with a lamp (*lucerna*) upon it (120, b). This candelabrum image cannot be interpreted as a symbol since it is found on a Pannonian lead roundel of the final period, when the ordering of the scenes was rather anarchic. On the other hand, when the candelabra are grouped in *threes*, each resting on *three* feet and surmounted by *three* lamps (37, d; 75, d; 146, a), or else, if the respective candelabra, without having three feet are none the less grouped in threes with lamps burning (71, b), or again, though without lamps, represented in the form of *three* columns, in each of these cases it is the symbolic interpretation which must have pride of place. In fact, the presence of the number *three* in all these representations clearly indicates that it must refer to the *three* Great Deities, the *three* degrees of initiation, and so on. The same interpretation is indicated for the candelabrum shown singly but with its pedestal resting on *three* feet and the lamp burning above it (146, c; 155, d; 228, c). In most cases the candelabrum is represented in the form of a single isolated column provided with a lamp (57, c; 81, c; 126, d; 135, d; 137, d; 162, c) or without one (42, d; 78, b; 125, d; 154, b). Finally, in four cases the identification of the candelabrum remains hypothetical (48, e; 72, e; 73, b; 175, b).

---

[64] Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 144ff. According to Dölger, *IXΘYC* I, p. 429, the caduceus, the cock, and the ram of the Danubian tablets are certain proof of the identity of the Danubian Riders with the Cabiri, because they are also found on coins of Lesbos (where the emblems of the Samothracian deities are figured). But it must be observed that the cult of Hermes so important in the religion of the Cabiri is almost absent from the Danubian plaques; see also Eitrem, *PWRE* VIII, 1, col. 776.

[65] S. Eitrem, *Hermes und die Toten*, Cristiania, 1909, p. 30ff.; Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, p. 264, n. 90, and *Myst. de Mithra*, p. 146, n. 2.

[66] Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, pp. 56, 227.

[67] Hampel, *AÉrt*, 1912, p. 343.

The frequency of the candelabrum in the sculptures of the Danubian plaques testifies to its use in mystery practice. This made it a sacred cult object. We note also that it does not appear with this character in the repertoire of the Mithraic reliefs.

The CANTHARUS is one of the numerous group of vases used in the practice of this cult either to convey various symbols or in the course of ritual ceremonies. Its presence in opposition to the lion (34, c; 48, c; 83, c) or in the symbolic group snake-lion-cantharus-cock (127, e; 132, e; 133, e; 135, d) it takes on a symbolic value which I have already emphasized above (p. 227 ff). Flanked by two snakes attempting to glide into it (108, a), it represents the allegory of the opposition in nature between earth and water. Sometimes too the cantharus is placed on the table near the fish, before the Goddess (87), or on the ground, to receive the ram's blood in the *criobolium* scene (111)—situations the sense of which is easily grasped. In some cases, on its own, with no determined function, it may be interpreted simply as a ritual vase (42, d; 44; 126, d; 137, d; 140, b; 153, c; 162, c). All the same, we cannot pretend that this form of vase was in any way obligatory in the Danubian Rider ritual. It can be counted among the other vases of the kind (amphoras, cups, rhytons, etc.) which seem to have been figured by the artists according to their own fancy, without its use being laid down in some ritual role of the liturgy.[68]

---

[68] Met with only once as an article of furniture, cf. Vermaseren *CIMRM* I, 508 and Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

The CISTA MYSTICA, a box for certain symbols or cult properties considered as holy, was usual in numerous oriental pagan religions. We see it reproduced on the Danubian plaques in three cases (from Romula, Viminacium, and one of unknown provenance). In two cases it has the form of a temple (34, a; 56, c), with a pediment resting on columns. Being made of struts, its interior was exposed to view, containing some round objects which cannot be identified. These objects, however, clearly show that it cannot have been a real temple, before which we might expect to see depicted a person sacrificing on an altar (as actually on the lead plaque from Romula —34, d), but rather a box to hold certain objects. Probably the very reason why the box in form of a temple is only sketched in outline is to let us see the objects it encloses. Nor can it be identified with a small house or pen for the sacrificial animals such as we see on some of the Mithraic monuments, where the bull is housed in a shelter shaped like a temple.[69] The Romula and Viminacium pieces (34, d; 56, c) have no animal carved inside the box, but only these small circular objects, used no doubt in the celebration of the mysteries. Thus Will's theory[70] that the frame is a real "temple or chapel" is undoubtedly mistaken.

It cannot therefore be doubted that we have here a *cista mystica*, shaped like a temple but intended to hold the sacred cult properties. Generally, however, the *cista mystica* was cylindrical in shape (*capsa*), and so it is shown on two engraved gems (195, b; 196, b). In these cases there is a snake trying to get out of the box, while at the other end of the register it is balanced by a sphinx. Elements like these transport us into the occult world of Isis,[71] a goddess who also had a certain influence on the Danubian Rider cult. In fact the snake cult common to the two religions must have facilitated the adoption of other Isiac elements. There were also other features in common to the two cults, such as their lunar, chthonic, and salvationist character.

---

[69] Vermaseren, *CIMRM* II, 2171, etc: *Mithras*, p. 69; Cumont, *MMM I*, p. 167, and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 335ff.

[70] Will, *Rel. cult.*, p. 32, n. 2.

[71] Cf. the *cista Capitolina* dedicated *Isidi sacr(um)*, cf. Stuart Jones *Catalog. Mus. Capitolino*, p. 359, no. 12, p. 9 and Cumont, *Relig. orient.*, pl. VI. The *cistae* contained τὰ ἱερά; Foucart, *Myst. Eleusis*, p. 378, and Dieterich, *Mithraslit*,. p. 124ff.

The CLUB can be identified with certainty only in the hand of one personage figuring in the lower register of a Danubian plaque (100, b), where it is a weapon borne by a *mystes*. Most often, the club can be confused with a spear (23, b; 106, b; 112, b; 125, c). It cannot be interpreted in any other way than as the preferred weapon of Heracles (cf. above, p. 124).

The CRATER is the most frequent of all the vases figured on the Danubian plaques, where it is found 36 times. It is often confused with the cantharus (above, p. 227ff) when figured in the symbolic group of the Elements. It may also figure as an emblem, when it is placed between two snakes. The emblem is that of the Dioscuri, often confused with the Danubian Riders. Equally, it may represent the allegorical combat of the Elements (water—earth) (cf. above, p. 268). Apart from these three particular situations (11; 24; 37; 55; 65; 66; 75; 113; 137; 153), the crater is often figured as a cult property. We see it reproduced in one case with two rhytons above it (1, c) and in two other cases it is reproduced more than once, three times on one monument (106, c) and four times on another (72, d-e). As the positions occupied by this vase are so varied, no allegorical meaning can be attributed to it (27, b; 41, c; 55, c; 59, b; 64, c; 80, b; 82, b; 100, b; 114, b; 118, b; 122, b; 137, d; 146, d; 154, b; 155, c; 156, b; 174, b; 181, b; 190, c; 193, A, c, B; 199, c). In two cases the ram's head is resting on the crater without any person in view (181, b; 184, b). On some monuments the identification of the crater is uncertain (7, b; 31, b; 191, A, c). This statistical summary shows that the crater was ordinarily in use in the celebration of the mysteries. It must have been employed especially as a receptacle for the mixed drink served at the banquet.

The CUP was also in regular use. The cup used in the banquet is often confused with some other receptacle and even with the altar (on monument 42, for instance, we may either have three cups and an altar or one cup and three altars). Frequently we see three cups on the table or beside it (7, b; 50, c; 72, e; 125, b; 126, b; 137, d; 162, a; 198, a; 203, c), in allusion to the three guests at the divine banquet or the agape of initiates. One engraved gem has three cups and a crater (190, c). In some cases there are two cups, in front of the two Riders (98) or placed elsewhere (148, b; 191, A, c; 193, A, c, B; 204, c). In the lay banqueting scene the presiding woman holds a cup at the level of her breast (132, d; 133, d; 135, c). Finally the Riders in the principal scene sometimes hold a cup in their hand (83, c; 90). In other cases it is the gods' auxiliaries who hold these cups in their hands (10, b; 183). The cups received the contents of the amphoras, cantharus, or craters. From them the sacred drink of the gods or initiates was drunk. The vase borrowing the divine grace of the drink it contained became itself sacred. Such receptacles were used in the celebration of all the mysteries.

The CYPRESS, the preeminently Mediterranean tree, appears only on two Danubian plaques, of Class A. On that from Apulum a snake is coiled round its trunk (1, b). This is an artistic theme borrowed from the imagery of the Thracian Rider. The bronze relief from Rome (174, a) has its lower register framed by two cypresses, from the tops of which two snakes rear up against one another so as to describe an arch. In the oriental religions there is a whole range of symbolism concerning the cypress, which was dedicated to the sun and moon deities. It was considered as the emblem of immortality owing to its perpetually green foliage. Also it represented the earth, and so on.[72] But as its appearance on the Danubian plaques is quite exceptional it cannot there have such a varied range of attributes. In our case it can only be interpreted as an artistic theme introduced casually.

The DAGGER is a weapon of many uses, giving rise to a number of symbolic and practical explanations in the Danubian Rider cult. As a fighting weapon the stone-carvers have put it in the hands of the attendants of the single Rider (9, b; 55, b) and in this case it may pass for a short sword. Pointed vertically upward in the hands of the Rider, it may represent a spear blade (64, a). The sanguinary nature of the Goddess is symbolized by a dirk placed under her feet (34, c;

---

[72] Rarely met with on the Mithraic bas-reliefs (Vermaseren, *CIMRM* I, p. 334 and II, p. 406 (index). See also Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 116, 125; *Relig. orient.*, p. 106 and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, p. 386ff; Rostovtseff, *Tablette du Louvre*, p. 19 sees here a proof of the influence of Attis-Cybele on the Danubian Goddess.

228, c), an aspect reinforced by the presence of Hecate with her two daggers (194, B).

But the dirk may also symbolize the sacral death and in this case it figures in the *occultatio* scene (62, b) or on the hips of the two assistants covering the initiate with the ram's skin (100, b). On the other hand, the weapon was put to practical use in the *criobolium*, near which it is planted in the earth (137, d) or placed near by (173, b) as a *culter sacrificialis*.[73] In the various places it occupies in the different registers of the Danubian plaques the dagger can be interpreted sometimes as a weapon, sometimes as a symbol, sometimes as a cosmic object, but it always kept a sacred character (23, b; 37, c; 47, b; 48, a; 71, b; 75, d; 83, a; 191, A, c).

The DOTS appear almost anywhere in the sculptural repertoire, sometimes in three groups of two (37), sometimes in single groups of three (57) or of two (75, 192), or else in varied numbers (162, 181, 199). It is very difficult to grasp their significance (apart from their ornamental role). When they figure in the upper registers they can be interpreted as stars, while in the lower registers they may do duty as loaves, fruit, etc.

The FRUITS are easily confused with loaves by reason of their circular shape. Their identification is certain only when they are accompanied by an equal number of loaves (three—55, c and e). Always grouped in threes these circular fruits (73, b) appear on a plate (*kernos*), placed upon the opening of a cantharus (137, d) or on the table before the Goddess, near the fish (79). In one case only, *seven* fruits (or loaves?) are grouped in the lower register (81, c). It may also be that a basket filled with circular objects is likewise an allusion to fruits (191, A, c). The identification remains uncertain in two cases (104, a; 125, d). But in most cases it is to be supposed that these fruits represent apples (cf. above, p. 263ff).

---

[73] The dagger carved on the tablet 173, b has a similar form to that of the daggers figuring on the taurobolic altars of Cybele, cf. Espérandieu, *Recueil Suppl.* (1931), nos. 6, 215, 348. In the Mithraic mysteries it had a dualfunction, as a cult object and a regular implement; Cumont, *MMM* I, pp. 68, 115ff., and Campbell, *MithrIcon*, pp. 254ff., 280ff. On an engraved gem (191, A, c) the dagger is seen planted in the earth between the lion and the cock. For the Mithraic monuments, Cumont (*op. cit.* I, p. 116) has given a symbolic explanation of this arrangement—the dagger was the emblem of water, the cock of air, and the lion of fire. But our gem is an isolated example, so that the grouping of the three symbols must be considered a matter of chance.

The GLOBE appears as a well-known attribute of Sol and the goddess Nemesis (50, c; 127, b; 132, b; 133, b; 135, a; 153, c; 182, c).

The GRID was used in the practice of the *crio-taurobolium* (cf. above, p. 237ff).

The HUMAN MASKS are seen only on four monuments of the single Rider, held in the left hand by the acolyte placed behind his master. The object is clearly reproduced on the Berlin bronze (174, d), where its aspect is more that of a human skull. In the three other cases (9, b; 45, b; 46, b) it can only be identified by analogy with this Berlin bronze. The first specialists to concern themselves with the Danubian monuments thought this mask or skull must represent the third Cabirus brother killed by the two others—something I cannot accept. It would be more plausible to take this mask (or skull?) as an emblem of death or as a ritual property used in magical practices. In any case it cannot be a mask used in the celebration of the mysteries, since it appears only on Class A monuments, when mysteries had not yet been added to the cult.

The LAMPS (*lucernae*) had a dual role in the cult. Placed by the head of Sol (83, b) or above the two Riders (72, c) they can be interpreted as symbols of the lights of heaven. But in most cases, the lamps are figured in the lower registers and must be connected with the chthonic world and the celebrations of the mysteries in a shadowy light. Sometimes they are grouped in threes and placed on candelabra (37, d; 71, b; 75, d) or on their own (34, c; 81, c; 106, b; 113, c). In two cases only, two lamps are seen in the same panel (7, b; 135, d). In view of their need to economize with space, the stone-carvers have in most cases put a single lamp in a panel, resting on a candelabrum (81, c; 120, c; 137, d; 155, d) or without any support (26, b; 41, d; 157, b; 174, c). On several pieces the identification of the lamps remains uncertain or else they are merged with other objects (42, b; 55, c; 73, b; 77; 125, c; 161, b). Owing to the dim light it gave the lamp was considered suitable for occult and magical practices, in moonlight or in underground places. This triple significance of lamps is already known in the

Mithraic mysteries[74] and in the practice of other mystery cults.

The LOAVES were on the list of sacred foods. The presence of *three* loaves in the lower register of the Danubian plaques of Class A is evidence of the custom of the sacred agape from the cult's first period of development onward (29, d; 40; 55, c; 59, b; 64, b; 77; 79). Owing to their circular form the loaves are easily confused with apples or other cult properties, but the artist usually gives them a round shape. Only the fine marble piece from Almus (71, c) clearly shows the three loaves with notches in the form of a rosette arrange side by side with three incised apples (similar to the loaves found at Pompei). The three loaves are met with again on most of the Class B Danubian reliefs, but then it is always the same allusion to the three guests—divine or human (34, e; 37, d; 42, c; 56, c; 72, e; 75, d; 77; 104, b; 113, c; 120, c; 126, e; 137, d; 140, c; 162, c). Each time in these cases the three loaves are placed in the lower registers of the reliefs. On the banqueting table there are three loaves (144, b; 191, A, c) or merely one loaf (155, d; 157, b; 173, b). In two cases there are four loaves instead of three (125, c; 228, A, c) and in a single case seven loaves (or fruits?) (81, c). To save space there is sometimes on the two-Rider monuments only one loaf, but in this case it is always placed on the mystic banqueting table (106, c; 155, d; 157, b; 173, b). As the mystic agapes served to the initiates always had bread as their principal food, its frequent occurrence on the Danubian monuments is quite natural and this explains their being grouped in *threes* which was also the number of guests.

The LYRE has been identified on two of the Class A Danubian Rider monuments (77; 174, b). On the latter of these, indeed, the identification still seems uncertain, since it has been interpreted as a *cista mystica,* or even a grid for the *crio-taurobolium.* But for my part I think it really is a lyre, indicated by the thickness of the frame at top and bottom and the straight lines joining the two bars (174, b). The presence of this musical instrument on the Thracian Rider reliefs found in Bulgaria, which served as a model for the Class A Danubian monuments with a single Rider, throws sufficient light on the present case.[75] In view of its sporadic presence and that only on

---

[74] Cumont, *MMM* I, p. 67.

[75] Kazarow, *Denkmäler* I, p. 13. The lyre is also present on a Razgrad

Class A monuments, we may suppose that it was no more than an accidental element in the repertoire of the Danubian Riders, destined to disappear very soon.

The MAN'S MASK (see HUMAN MASKS).

The OENOCHOE is figured once only, on a Pannonian lead plaque, with a fairly chaotic repertoire. The vase is placed behind the bust of Luna (125, b). It belongs to the varied group of receptacles used in the celebration of the cult and containing the sacred beverage.

The PATERA was another vase in common use. It can be perfectly distinguished as used in the ram sacrifice on a terracotta relief (55, c). In other cases, the vase may be simply a solar disc (45, a) or an inverted crown (*corona*) (22, b).

The PLATE, the "*kernos*" or dish for the sacred foods placed on the table or for their transport, is also on the list of sacred vessels. It appears twice (71, c; 79).

The RHYTON, the most elegant of the ritual and communion vases, is seen in the hands of the single Rider on a bronze plaque from Razgrad (cf. above, p. 147 and pl. XIII,I). On the Class A monuments the rhyton is held in the right hand (45, b; 90). As an artistic theme it then passes to the two-Rider monuments (3, b; 47, a). The rhyton is raised aloft by some member of the God's retinue in most of the single-Rider reliefs (9, b; 16, b; 10; 29, c; 45; 174, b; 200, b). Another monument of the same class shows us two rhytons deposited on a crater (1, c). But the most interesting of all is the marble relief from the Bucharest Museum, where the two Riders each hold a rhyton, while above the Goddess's head, arranged in such a way as to make a sort of crown, we see two other rhytons (47, a).

Hampel[76] declared that the rhyton (and generally the numerous vases figured on the Danubian plaques) was an allusion to the marked liking of the Dacians for wine. A naive explanation if it were one. As in all other cults with mysteries attached, this luxury vessel served practical needs, at the same time as representing certain symbols, above all by its arrangement in groups of *three*. These

---

plaque (cf. above, p. 148 and pl. XIV,II). Abramić, *Serta Hoffilleriana*, p. 307, also finds the grid on tablet 111, where I discern the column with four spiral turns, symbol of the four cosmic Elements (cf. above, p. 230f).

[76] Hampel, *BdRég*, 1904, p. 46.

vases had their uses during the celebration of the liturgy, the sacrifices, the libations, the sacred banquet, the collection of the ram's blood, and so on. As it was a sacred vessel the artists preferred the most elegant forms of the Graeco-Roman ceramic repertoire. The rhyton was considered quite specially the goblet of the gods or of kings, for it was frequently manufactured of gold or silver and in the Hellenistic age all the people of the Orient had adopted it.

The THUNDERBOLT is outlined, according to a very unsure identification, on an engraved gem (197, c), in a place in the bottom register where it seems to have no function. Moreover, the representation, a trident attached to a lunar crescent, is of very unusual form.

The THYRSUS is included solely in the composition of a single-Rider relief (77), where it must have been borrowed from the iconography of the Thracian Rider but has no special meaning on the Danubian plaques. This would explain its prompt disappearance.

The TORCH, if we except the two torches held by Hecate (194, B), can be identified with the first of the candelabra of columnar form reproduced on certain Pannonian lead plaques (135, d). There, instead of the dim light of the *lucerna*, we see a great jet of flame which gives the whole object the appearance of an immense torch. I need hardly emphasize the usefulness of the torch among the properties employed by the initiates.

The TREE made no more than a temporary appearance in the form of the cypress with a snake coiled round its trunk (1, c; 90; 174, b). On these Class A monuments it was borrowed from the iconography of the Thracian Rider (cf. above, p. 154ff) .But the tree was to acquire an extensive use in the repertoire of the Class B reliefs at the time of the adoption of the practice of *criobolium*, when the ram had to be hung from a tree so that it might be skinned. We see the tree in the *criobolium*, most often with three main branches (120, c; 125, d; 126, d; 173, b) and less frequently with seven branches (127, d). But other forms of tree are also seen (57, c; 111; 132, d; 133, d; 135, c; 137, d; 155, d; 162, d; 194, A, c), all in the scene of the hung ram. Finally, the tree figures in certain cases where no symbolic meaning can be attached to it (37, d; 56, d; 72, d; 75, d; 193) or else in the *occultatio* scene (23, b; 26, b).

It may be that in the enclosed space reserved for the practice of *criobolium*, in some secret place, such a tree did exist, stripped of all its branches but *three*. Its role in the practice of the blood-bath (that of the ram) made it sacred (*arbor vitae*).

The VESSEL is hardly ever lacking from the Danubian Rider repertoire when the monuments are completely preserved. Apart from the special vessels I have described (amphora, cantharus, *cista mystica*, crater, cup, oenochoe, patera, plate, rhyton) we observe also the presence of ordinary vases on another series of reliefs (12; 26, b; 57, c; 71, b; 85, b; 148, b; 191, A, c; 193, A, c, B; 195, b; 197, b; etc.). Worthy of special attention in this respect is a bronze plaque (from Oescus and Romula) offering some special forms (72, d, e). Besides two great cups, we see three great cauldrons with vertical handles supported by feet. These large sized receptacles were used to boil the food for the initiates' agape. Another relief showing vases of characteristic form is a Class C monument reproducing the banquet of the gods (98). Before the two Rider-Gods are set two high-stemmed cups recalling the Dacian "*pommières*" of the La Tène culture. The Goddess has before her a two-handled pot of pre-Roman form, also of Dacian origin. The bronze plaque found at Virunum (173, b) also shows us the silhouette of two vases. The first, with a large opening, is placed immediately at the foot of the tree under the neck of the decapitated ram, with the evident purpose of collecting its blood. Beside *Aries* another vase is depicted, a perfectly spherical outline with a large opening. This undoubtedly was to contain the animal's blood needed for the ritual practice of initiation.

We must note also as forming part of the repertoire of the Danubian monuments a whole series of UNIDENTIFIED OBJECTS. For example, on the table guarded by Nemesis, near a loaf and two apples, there is also an object of crescent shape (173, b). This no doubt must be something else served at the meal (a cake?). On a relief from Apulum (1, c) in the lower register, among other symbolic objects, we see one shaped like a Phrygian cap—perhaps by analogy with the Mithras cult the Danubian Rider's cap had also assumed a symbolic meaning? What meaning is to be attached to the object in the form of a cross on a Pannonian lead roundel (162, c)? Four lead plaques (75, b; 127, e; 135, d; 146, b) show a heart-shaped object, equally difficult to identify. Still unexplained, too, are the four linear objects (37; 73; 195; 199), another oblong shape (40), and a circular object (34, d; 37, d; 50, c; 62, a; 76, b; 106, c; 148, b; 158; 175, b; 191, A, c). Besides these there are the altogether shapeless and indefinable objects (1, 7, 23, 31, 37, 41, 48, 56, 58, 63, 73, 77, 81, 85, 97, 104, 106, 125, 126, 148, 154, 177, 178, 182, 191, 192, 193, 195, 199, 204, 228). On certain metal plaques the outlines of several oval objects can be distinguished, suggesting the outline of a heart but capable just as well of representing some insect (75, b; 81, b; 127, e; 135, d; 146, b). It is not impossible that these puzzling outlines represent bees, since honey was used in the practice of the mysteries (instead of water for washing the hands and without doubt also at the mystic banquet).[77]

As their iconographical and ideological analysis shows, we can attach to most of these objects a Mithraic origin. It is one more evidence of the strong influence of Mithraic practice on the Danubian Rider mysteries, in respect of their mystical inventory and ritual organization. Second place in the series of influences which they underwent must be given to the Cybele cult, explained by Cybele's affinities with the Danubian Goddess. Besides these sources of influence there must be included also that of the various solar or chthonic religions akin to the Danubian Rider cult (Isis, Jupiter Dolichenus, Sabazius, and so on). The full tide of syncretism in the third century A.D. greatly facilitated such contacts.[78]

---

[77] Vermaseren, *Mithras*, p. 121.

[78] Ziehen, *AA*, 1904, p. 23, and Chapouthier, *Dioscures*, p. 291ff.

# CONCLUSIONS

The antiquaries of the sixteenth century were the first to take an interest in the gems engraved with scenes from the Danubian Rider cult. They classed them as Abraxas pieces, though they did not know the name or nature of the deities themselves. It was not till almost the middle of the nineteenth century that Gerhard proposed the identification of the two Riders with the Cabiri. This hypothesis was to have a good run, keeping quite a number of supporters until 1937, when the first edition of my monograph on the subject was published. In the work he published in 1889 Antonescu took pains to discover cult scenes of the Cabiri on the 24 reliefs he had assembled. But this identification was to be challenged, with powerful arguments, by Cumont, whose first studies of the subject appeared at the end of last century. The Belgian scholar interpreted the scenes as a mixture of Thracian Rider cult and Mithraic practice. It was this which prompted first Hampel, then Buday, to attribute the whole cult to the Thracian Rider, with strong influence later, they thought, from the Mithras religion and the Dioscuri.

Adopting this position as a point of departure, Rostovtseff attributed to the cult an Iranian origin from the north of the Pontic region. He called the two equestrian divinities the Thraco-Mithraic Riders. But Kazarow's work then proved decisively that the Danubian Riders were not to be confused with the Thracian Rider and that the two cults had their own individual developments. Subsequently, credit must go to Chapouthier for a precise account of the differences between the monuments of the Dioscuri and those of the Danubian Riders.

In my monograph published in 1937 I sought to eliminate, once and for all, the various designations so wrongly applied to these Danubian deities—"Cabiri". "Thraco-Mithraic Riders", "Dioscuri", and the rest. At the same time I insisted on a Dacian origin for the earliest Danubian plaques. I gave further substance to the appellation *Danubian Riders* for our deities, originally due to Vasile Pârvan, and supported it with arguments now generally accepted.

The appearance of my *Corpus* (1937) provoked valuable new studies of the subject from such scholars as Abramić, Kazarow, Ianošić, Ochsenschlager, and others, who doubled the number of Danubian plaques. It gave rise also to a vigorous debate about the real nature of this mysterious cult. Among the innumerable theories put forward the most important in my opinion were those of Cumont and Will. Cumont, denying that the Danubian Rider reliefs were the expression of an organized cult, dismissed them rather sweepingly as mere amulets and phylacteries. This theory was disputed by all the specialists. Will, in his well-known monograph on Graeco-Roman cultic reliefs, made a series of valuable contributions to our better knowledge of the Danubian religion. There are some of his propositions, however, which cannot be accepted. Among these I mention in particular his denial of the artistic and religious influence of the Mithraic cult on the Danubian Riders and his substitution for it of that of the Dioscuri, to which he attributes an exaggerated importance. Nor can I accept his over-complex system of classification of the Danubian plaques.

The first point to remember is that of the 232 Danubian monuments 190 originated in the three great Danubian provinces, Dacia (60), Moesia (58), and Pannonia (72). Except for Dacia, of which the territory seems to have been uniformly covered by finds, the majority of those in the other two provinces come from the neighbourhood of the River Danube. In these riverine areas, in fact, the finds of Danubian plaques are surpassed in number only by those of Mithraic monuments.

Although not yet confirmed by archaeology, the existence of *sanctuaries* specially dedicated to the Danubian Rider cult and the celebration of its mysteries seems to me beyond a doubt. It is confirmed by many pieces of evidence on the monuments.

There is no corpus of Graeco-Roman cult reliefs which can boast of a greater variety in the *choice of materials* for the manufacture of its monuments. The Danubian Rider monuments are made of copper, bronze, limestone, marble, lead, terracotta, and precious or semi-precious stone. The number of pieces in lead, a metal scarcely used by other religions, is very striking. There is no doubt that the use of lead is an indicator for the Danubian Rider cult, and marks its chthonian, magical, occult, and related aspects, which particularly characterized its last phase of development.

The same can be said about *the form of the monuments*. No other category of cult reliefs can number seven types of monument, as can the Danubian plaques. On the other hand, compared with other religious monuments, the Danubian plaques are of *small size*, a fact which can be explained by the occult nature of the religion and the magical qualities attributed to quite a number of its monuments (in use as talismans or amulets). In the case of the stone monuments, they were often given a more attractive appearance by *polychromy*, which emphasized certain parts of the pictorial repertoire. From the artistic point of view, *the repertoire of the Danubian plaques is richer and more varied* than those of other contemporary votive reliefs.

The absence of votive inscriptions, replaced here and there by indecipherable groups of letters, is, strange to say, a valuable piece of evidence. In fact, it once more emphasizes the very secret character of the worship of these deities, practised always "in secret session". To this day the *names* of the Danubian deities are unknown, *nomina arcana*. It is this very fact which explains the absence of votive altars—it was forbidden publicly to pronounce or engrave their names. But the pictorial repertoire leaves no doubt that a *votive character* must be attributed to them. Only the monuments of very small size (medallions, engraved gems, etc.) could have served *prophylactic* purposes for those who wore them.

In respect of their iconography the Danubian plaques are noteworthy for the highly systematic ordering of their representations, which are grouped in registers running horizontally in a certain narrative order. Their central point is constituted by *the telling of a myth*—the myth of the Riders and the Goddess. This occupies the central place. Above it, scenes and symbols emphasize their celestial character. Below it, the scenario unfolds in pictures of their rites and mysteries, or images of different objects and symbols connected with their occult practices. The majority of the reliefs have *three registers*, which express by their number and the specific nature of their contents the triple function of these divinities, terrestrial, celestial, and eschatological.

The *chronology* of the Danubian Rider monuments can be broadly outlined from their geographical distribution and according to the evolution of their sculptural repertoire, with any supporting evidence which may be yielded by the excavation strata of the archaeological sites where they were found. The earliest in date are the monuments of the series with a single Rider (Class A), found mostly on Dacian territory and therefore to be dated after the creation of the province of Dacia (2nd century A.D.). The latest are the monuments (Classes B and C) with stylistic and religious elements (*Sol Invictus*, *draco*, etc.) which take us on to the second half of the third century and even the beginning of the fourth.

Concerning the adoption of the most appropriate criteria for the classification of these monuments there have been long discussions in the search for a common denominator. For my part, I think that any good classification must be based on three essential elements: the chronological series, the typology, and the geographical distribution of these types. Starting from these criteria I arrived finally at the determination of three main classes:

A — the class of monuments with a single Rider and Goddess;
B — the class of monuments with two Riders and Goddess;
C — the class of monuments depicting only the divine banquet.

This distribution into three classes is founded on the evolution of the myth constituting the subject of the principal scene. The first class is specific to Dacia. It is the earliest and has three subdivisions (2nd century). But the period of widest diffusion of the cult (3rd to 4th centuries) is illustrated by the monuments of the second class (B), found in numerous provinces. This second class has quite a number of subdivisions, the most important of which are those constituted by the groups: Dacian, Pannonian, Dalmatian. These pieces were made in the age of religious syncretism, at a moment when the pictorial repertoire of the Danubian monuments had been enriched by various artistic and religious borrowings. This makes the question of their interpretation significantly more complicated (Chapouthier). The last class (C) is that of a new regional category of monuments which limit their repertoire to a single scene (3rd century). The numerous subdivisions of Class B are explained by the "regionalism" of certain scenes, an inevitable consequence of the isolation of the cult from the mass of the population and the rigorous secrecy with which it and its mysteries surrounded themselves.

The principal Goddess of the Danubian plaques has no particular character which might allow her to be identified with any other Goddess. She has no accompaniment of attributes, symbols, details of clothing, or the like, such as would be of value in the discovery of her true name. No decisive indication is given by the table with the fish before her—nor can she be identified with Atargatis. Nor can the fact that she feeds the Rider's mounts be taken as irrefutable evidence that she is Epona. All we may do is to consider her as a "Great Goddess" with many attributes, the number of which increased in proportion as her contacts developed with other cults of female divinities, a very widespread phenomenon in the age of syncretism.

While the Goddess stayed the same in aspect and religious functions during the whole course of evolution implied by the three classes of monuments mentioned above, the Riders on the contrary underwent a progressive enrichment of their costume, their symbols, and their functions. Their Phrygian costume was too fashionable at that period to suggest any problems to the specialists. The same can be said of their quality as "Riders". But it must be noted, too, that the single Rider, and the two Riders no less, were warrior deities, armed at the beginning only with the double axe (*bipennis*) and later with spears as well. In the third century such divinities were to have a recognised place in the military pantheon (Mars, Victoria, *draco*, etc.).

So far as precedence is concerned, we note the place of honour reserved for the Goddess in the principal scene, and the manner in which the Riders salute her. She is evidently personage number one. The triple aspect of the divine attributes (celestial, terrestrial, chthonian) has made possible a great variety of syncretistic combinations, although in its origins this religion was no more than a small local cult, spread over the Daco-Getic world, with its Roman iconography formed north of the Danube.

The Riders were assisted in their fight by *attendants*, a usual element in all the oriental religions. The snake too must be counted among their allies when the fight is by land, and the fish when it is by sea. But the dog and the lion as attendants were no more than loan figures, borrowed from the iconography of the Thracian Rider and quickly to disappear.

It cannot be claimed that the *fallen men,* trampled under the hooves of the Riders' horses, were simple representations of *Evil.* They have no monstrous aspect and are always shown disarmed. They are elements of the myth about which nothing is yet known. Doubtless they symbolized the negative, contrary element, overcome by the Danubian Riders.

*Nemesis* has imposed herself on the cult as the emblem of justice and vengeance. She exacts payment for the faults committed by the men prostrate on the earth under the horses' feet. Her role was to increase in importance during the third century, when she is frequently met with in the military pantheon. She is the implacable keeper of the secret of the mysteries, with magical and nocturnal functions of her own, while Hecate reigns with her high hand exclusively over these occult nocturnal practices.

*The identification of the Danubian Riders with the Cabiri, Dioscuri, the Thracian Rider, or Sabazius* are theories finally abandoned to-day. The most probable theory of their origin is that they were *local, Dacian* deities. In connection with this question of origins, some of *the bronze plaques from Razgrad* are of importance for their resemblances with the earliest Danubian pieces. I regard the scenes on the Razgrad bronze plaques as iconographic variants of the Danubian Rider cult, with an artistic development which was arrested half way.

*The cradle of the iconography of the Danubian Rider* cult was southern Dacia, after the Roman conquest, where the first monuments of the kind appeared. Dacia was undoubtedly the region where the iconography of these divinities took settled shape. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that out of the 31 pieces with a single Rider 18 come from this province, the rest being divided equally between Moesia and Dalmatia. The Thracian Rider reliefs, with certain complementary elements borrowed from Mithraic monuments, served as a model for the Class A Danubian plaques, the earliest. The distribution of the plaques with a single Rider north and south of the Danube *draws a clear line of demarcation* *around the countries inhabited by Geto-Dacian tribes,* and thus shows that *the deities concerned belonged to the pantheon of these populations.* These deities of Geto-Dacian origin took on sculptural form through the medium of their myth at the moment when that myth was undergoing the *interpetatio romana.* Obviously this Roman interpretation of the myth could only take place in Dacia where the mass of the population who had created it lived. The Dacian pantheon included a Great Goddess with the fish as her attribute. It also included an equestrian god, a sky god armed with the double axe (*bipennis*). These two divinities were connected with one another and with other divine personages by a myth which remains unknown to us. This myth possessed narrative elements capable of facilitating artistic and religious borrowings from numerous Graeco-Roman cults and oriental cults of the age. In that way our myth evolved, becoming progressively more complex, as its iconography attests. The high tide of syncretism was to show itself here in the Class B plaques.

It is to be noted that the regions covered by the Danubian Class B plaques also were those occupied by the Thraco-Getic tribes (*CMRED,* I, p. XXII). The narrative development of the principal myth *on the model of the tale of the Dioscuri* determined the appearance of the Class B Danubian monuments. The reason that the Danubian deities are equestrian deities must be the importance of the horse in their myth and that of the Goddess. Moreover it must not be forgotten that the Thraco-Getic populations had a marked predilection for equestrian divinities.

It may be that the earliest monuments of the Class B Danubian category were those in which only one enemy is shown under the feet of one Rider's horse.

An identification of the Danubian Riders with the Cabiri is impossible because the scenario of the Danubian plaques does not correspond to theirs. It must be added that the dress, weapons, and symbols of the two pairs of deities are totally different from one another. The same can be said about the identification of the Danubian Riders with the Dioscuri. *The links between them are merely of an artistic order.* The religious borrowings were of no great significance. We thus have a bundle of evidence proving that the Danubian

Riders in their beginnings consisted of one "Great Goddess" and one "Great God", of local origin, whose iconography, together with its religious content, was enriched by contacts with other cults.

This conclusion disposes of Cumont's theory, seeing in the Danubian plaques nothing but *phylacteries* or *amulets*, unconnected with any organized religion. Moreover, Cumont's theory is countered also by the size of some of the plaques, as well as by the richness of their sculptural repertoire, revealing a well organized religion with its own sanctuaries for public cult ceremonies and secret mysteries. These *mysteries* of the two-Rider cult were organized on the model of the Mithraic mysteries at the moment when the number of Riders was in fact doubled. It seems that women were admitted to these mysteries.

Some engraved gems are evidence of the fact that in the last phase of its existence the Danubian Rider cult had also adopted a series of *gnostic and magical elements*. It was the period when lead (the metal preferred above all by magicians) was largely used in the casting of Danubian plaques. The magical properties of lead were so much esteemed that the votaries even wore medallions or amulets made of this metal.

The *solar symbols* were present from the beginning. Sol and Luna took first place. Their role was to assume great importance in the third century—the age of *Sol Invictus*, figured in his quadriga on some of the Pannonian lead plaques. But it must be agreed that the solar elements on the Danubian plaques were influenced by Mithraic elements. Moreover, the worship of the Sun in a country as cold as the Danube region is self-explanatory. On certain examples of the Danubian plaques the assimilation can be noted of the Goddess with Luna and of Sol with the two Riders—Sol Rising and Sol Setting.

The *stars* reproduced in different ways on the Danubian monuments are also an indication of the solar and celestial nature of the cult. When figured in pairs beside the two Riders, they can be assimilated with the two great stars *Hesperus* and *Phosphorus*, with which the two Riders themselves were also assimilated. It was again in the third century that these magical and solar superstitions slipped into the Danubian cult under the influence of its contacts with various oriental religions.

The three busts accompanied by Sol and Luna reproduced in the upper register of the Class B plaques or as the unique scene of the Class C plaques represent the three Danubian divinities grouped as a triad. The divine triad is preparing to partake of the *sacred banquet* where they will be served fish, ram's meat, and a special beverage. This theme is evidence of resemblance with Mithraic iconography. The Danubian deities are assembled at this banquet after the conclusion of their terrestrial epic, to celebrate their victory in fitting style in the celestial regions. Subsequently the mysteries were to simulate this divine banquet in the mystic agape served to the initiates. On the Class C plaques found in Dobrudja, the divine banquet is reproduced as a copy of the scenes of this type figuring in the upper register of the Class B reliefs, specific only to Dacia. We note that in both categories of monument the deities have their heads and bodies dressed in the fashion of the Geto-Dacians (the men with the same cut of beard) and in keeping with the descriptions of Ovid. It seems useful to repeat that the Danubian plaques with the divine banquet have been found only in Dacia and Dobrudja.

Connected with the celestial elements among which it figures, the *eagle* appears only on the monuments with two Riders. He is a messenger of the gods, symbolizing victory, and must have been contributed by the soldiers, who borrowed him from some other cult.

Another divine messenger was the *raven*. He appears in all registers of the Danubian plaques. Apart from his messenger function he also had other roles. He announced rain, for instance. It seems that the raven must have been borrowed from the Mithraic monuments. Likewise imported from the artistic and religious repertoire of Mithraism were the allegories of the *Winds* and the *Seasons*, which were moreover rather rare on the Danubian plaques. Finally, the *peacock*, figured only once, could be interpreted as a psychopompic element.

From the artistic and religious aspect the *mystic symbols* of the Danubian plaques are much richer and more interesting than those of other contemporary cults. Some of these symbols were peculiar to the Danubian Riders (the fish, the ram, the snake, and so on), but others were borrowed from other cults. The whole array of symbols was destined later, in the age of syncretism, to be strongly influenced, both artistically and religiously, by the Mithras cult. The most frequent of symbols is the *fish,* attributed to the Goddess and in use as a food served at the two kinds of banquet, divine and mystic. The *ram,* a sacred animal, was directly connected with the Riders in whose honour it was sacrificed at the beginning. Later it acquired its role in the celebration of the *criobolium* and the *occultatio,* to end up as a meat served at the divine banquet or the mystic agape. At first the *cock* too was sacrificed. In course of time the rituals using the cock acquired a rich symbolic value, chthonian, apotropaic, and celestial. The *snake,* considered an *agathodemon,* was the ally of the Riders in their fight. It also symbolized the vault of heaven and the underworld. Under Mithraic influence, the *lion* became the symbol of fire coming in the end to denote a degree of initiation.

The artistic and religious influence of Mithraic practices was also to give the final touches to the cult of the *four cosmic Elements* figured on the Danubian plaques. These *principia vitae* were to find their most pregnant expression on some of the Pannonian lead plaques, represented by the symbolic group: snake-crater-lion-cock. But at an earlier period this religious theme is to be identified with the *column with four spiral turns,* found on the earliest Danubian plaques.

Apart from a public cult, the Danubian Rider religion possessed certain secret rituals, indicated on the Class A plaques. These secret rituals were to develop into real *mysteries,* above all when the single Rider of the beginnings was joined by a companion. Among them were some which seem to have had greater importance. Such is the rather puzzling ritual pictured by *a man with rod and line seated before a tripod with the ram's head,* or that of *the man with arms outstretched towards the crater.* It must be agreed that their meaning is unknown to us.

From the same period in which a second Rider was added to the single divinity of the beginnings is the practice of the *crio-taurobolium.* This practice replaces the sacrifice of the ram, characteristic of the earliest stage in the development of the cult. It must have been one more case of borrowing from a foreign cult, this time the cult of Cybele. The *crio-* and the *taurobolium* were operated both together, with the purpose of bodily and spiritual purification of the neophyte aspiring to the rank of *Aries*.

The scene of the symbolic death (*occultatio*), reproduced in several iconographic variants, belongs to the series of occult practices known from the Mithraic mysteries, from which indeed they were borrowed. The ram's skin, the dagger, the allegory of Nemesis, played a quite special part in this practice, being the signs simply of *symbolic death*.

The various *stages of initiation* are also expressed in different ways. The mystagogue is bearded, the neophyte appears quite naked, with bandaged eyes. The initiation had three degrees, *Aries*, *Miles*, and *Leo*. Their number was fixed under the influence of the mysteries of Cybele.

The scenario of the mysteries was concluded by the scene of the *mystical banquet of initiates*, the agape, different from the divine banquet served to the gods in the celestial regions. The human banquet is placed always in the lower registers of the plaques. Just as on the gods' table, the foods consumed were fish and ram's meat, accompanied by pure beverages. The number of guests was likewise the same: three. The banquet ceremony followed the rules observed in the similar banquet of the Mithraic mysteries, with the same solemn character. The great number of ritual properties figuring in the repertoire of the Danubian plaques and its great quantity of symbols testify to a cult possessing highly complex and well developed mysteries. Most of these properties and symbols are again of Mithraic origin.

It seems that the Danubian Rider cult was influenced in equal measure by the Mithraic mysteries and the cult of Cybele. This influence was strongest from the moment when a second Rider was added to the "Great God" of the beginnings, and notably in the high tide of syncretism in the first half of the third century A.D.

The cult of the Danubian Riders flourished above all in the neighbourhood of the military camps of Pannonia, Moesia, and Dacia. But in the second half of the third century Roman authority was withdrawn from Dacia. From this moment onward the fortresses of the middle and lower Danube valley were sorely harrassed by Barbarian attacks. These events contributed in great measure to the gradual disappearance of the cult in the course of the fourth century.

# TOPOGRAPHICAL INDEX*

## (Monuments)

DACIA
- *DROBETA* 205, 206
- *ROMVLA-MALVA* 207, 230
- *TIBISCUM* 200-204
- *SVCIDAVA* 208

MOESIA
- *DVROSTORVM* 229
- *HORREVM MARGI* 209
- *NOVAE* 232

PANNONIA
- *AD MILIARE-AD MILITARE* 131
- *AQVINCVM* 212
- *BASSIANAE* 219
- *CORNACVM* 141
- *CVCIVM* 68
- *FOSSAE* 213
- *GORSIVM-HERCVLIA* 166
- *IDIMINVM* 214
- *SIRMIVM* 215, 216, 231

BULGARIA
- *Silistra* 229
- *Steaklen* 232

HUNGARY
- *Óbud* 212
- *Tać* 166

ROMANIA
- *Drobeta-T. Severin* 205, 206
- *Reşca* 207, 230
- *Zăgujeni* 200-204
- *Celei* 208

YUGOSLAVIA
- *Cuprija* 209
- *Hrtkovici* 146
- *Jarak* 213
- *Mačvanska Mitrovica* 125-127, 217, 218
- *Prhovo* 221, 222
- *Putinici-Indija* 166
- *Sašinci* 219
- *Sremska Mitrovica* 215, 216, 231
- *Suljam* 220
- *Vizič* 223
- *Vojka* (?) 214

*Provenance unknown* 210, 211, 224-228

---

* In this and in the three short Indexes which follow (pp. 289-293) the references are to the serial numbers of *Monuments* in the Supplement (pp. 5-22). In the General Index (pp. 294-313) the references are to *page* numbers in Vol. II.

# MUSEUM INDEX

Bulgaria
- Steaklen Museum 232

Hungary
- Budapest, National Museum 172
- Téléky Count Collection 198
- Szeged, F. Mora Collection 30

Italy
- Perugia, Etrusco-Roman Museum 228
- Guardabassi Collection 228
- Odeschalchi Collection 189

Romania
- Bistriţa, Library "Protopopiatul romano-catolic", Collection 7
- Bucharest, Archaeological Institute, Collection 45
- Călăraşi, Museum 229
- Caracal, Museum 207
- Corabia, Museum 208
- Drobeta-T.Severin, "Porţile de Fier" Regional Museum 205-206
- Timişoara, Regional Museum 200-204

Yugoslavia
- Belgrade, Archaeological Museum 56, 57, 210, 211, 224
- Novi Sad, Museum 213
- Osijek, Slavonian Museum 225
- Požarevać, Gymnasium Collection 57
- Sremska Mitrovica, Museum 146, 214, 222, 231
- Vukowar, A. Dorn Collection 224

# EPIGRAPHICAL INDEX

IAW AΔWNAI MIXAHΛ KENE 189

# INDEX OF COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS, ETC.

## 1. *Types of Monument*

Engraved gem 228
Plaque, lead
  In form of *aedicula* 208; Rectangular 206, 208, 209-211, 214, 215, 217-220, 223-225; With four registers 146
Roundel, lead 212, 213, 216, 222
Roundel, marble 205, 229
Tablet, stone 207
Tablet marble
  Rectangular 200, 202, 204, 209; (clay cast) 203
  Roundtopped 232

## 2. *Materials*

Jasper 228
Lead 206, 208, 210-216, 222, 225, 230-231
Marble 200-205, 227, 229, 232
Stone 207

## 3. *Technical Details*

Exposure to fire 202
Painting 205, 229
Suspension hole 208, 220

## 4. *Compositional Elements*

*Acroteria* 126, 208, 228
*Aedes Augustalium* 120
*Aedicola* 206, 208, 210, 221
Altar 200 (?), 203, 232
*Amphora* 146, 228
Attendant (see also Man)
  Single 202, 205; Two 203; Holding horse's tail 203
Axe (double) 204, 232
*Balteus* 228
Base (pedestal) 146
Bearded man 204, 205
Building (apsidal) 201, 204
Bull 230
Busts: (Five) 200, 204; With cuirass 189
Camp (Roman) 200
*Canabae* 212

*Candelabrum*, three-legged 228
Chiton 146, 228
Circles (five) 201
Cloak 189, 203, 228, 230, 232
Column, Tuscan, 228; In spiral 210; With four spiral turns 200, 204
Cock 189, 200, 203 (?), 204, 210 (?), 228; In tympanum of temple 228
Cups (three) 7, 146
Crater 204, 210; Flanked by serpents 230
*Criobolium* 146
Cuirass 228
Dagger 228
Demonic figures 189, 228
Dolphin 201
*Draco* 228
Eagle 210 (?)
  Holding crown 230; With wings spread 146, 228
Feet in form of serpents 228
Fish 146, 202-205, 228; (Held by man) 7
Goddess
  Standing behind table 146, 200, 201, 205, 206, 207, 210, 228, 232; Welcoming horses 200, 203; Feeding horses 146; Making pouch of skirt to feed horse 201; Holding out hands to horses' muzzles 228; Wearing Phrygian cap 146, 228; With veil 204
Hecate 190
Head (animal?) 204
Himation 146, 228
Horsemen
  Single 200-203, 232; Two 146, 204-231; Wielding double-axe 146, 204, 210, 232; Wielding spear 200, 203, 206; With hand raised to strike 205; Bearded 204, 205; In Phrygian costume 146, 200-205, 206, 229; Bearing *draco* 228
Lamp 146, 206; Three; 146, d; Two; 146, e
Lampstands, three-legged 146, c,d,e
Lion 7, 146, 228, 232; accompanying horseman 232
Loaf (?) 7
Luna balancing Sol 146, 200-204, 206, 210, 228, 232; With lunar crescent 228
Man/Men (see also Attendants) Naked 146; Bearded 202; Holding rhyton 200; Dragging ram towards altar 203; Holding horse's tail 200; Raising hands over table 200, 204 (two); Young, seated, holding elongated object toward three-legged table with ram's head 201-203
  prostrate under horses 146, 200-232;
    face downwards 200, 201, 228; lying on his back 203; facing viewer and raising hand 204; painted in 205.
*Mensa Delphica* 206
Nemesis 187, 190, 202, 203, 207, 228
Objects, indistinct 146, 210. 228
*Occultatio* 207

Pediment 210, 228; (With two columns) 210
Phrygian costume 7, 200-205, 228
Quadruped 232
Ram 7, 146, 201-203; 228, 232; Head 7, 146, 201-203, 228, 232; Hanging from tree 146
Raven 206
*Retentura sinistra* 205, 206
*Rhyton* 200
Rider-Gods, Riders (see Horsemen)
Rings (?loaves) 228
Serpents 146, 189, 202-204, 206, 232; bordering whole scene 146; flanking Goddess's head (two) 204; flanking horseman's head (two) 232
Shield 189, 228
Snakes (see Serpents)
Sol (balancing Luna) 146, 200-206, 210, 228, 229
Soldier (holding spear) 146
Spear 146, 200, 206
Star 146, 210, 228, 230; two 210, 228; three 228; seven 228, 230; Balancing Sol and Luna, 146 (two); In *Tympanum* 228
Table 7; Three-legged 146, 200-206; 228; With fish 204, 228; With ram's head 201-203; With vessel 204
Temple, 201, 228
Triade 200, 204
Tree 146
Tunics 200, 203-205, 232
*Tympanum* 210, 228
Vase 200
Veil 204
Vessel 202-204; Egg-shaped flanked by serpents 202, 203; Conical 203 (three)
Victory 146, 210, 228; Crowning horseman 146; With Crown in hand 228; Two 210
*Villa romana* 220
*Villa suburbana* 207
Whip 189, 228
Woman (attendant) 201, 232

# GENERAL INDEX VOL. II

Figures refer to pages. The footnotes are not indexed.
Abbreviations: DRG = Danubian Rider-God(s);
DGG = Danubian Great Goddess

Abramić, M. 29, 41, 139, 141, 245, 278
Abraxas 23, 63, 73, 178, 179, 277
Abraxas-Iao 42
Abrittus (Razgrad q.v.) 147-153
*Acroterium* 97
'Αδωναί-Adonaïos 73, 179
*Aedicula* 66, 67, 83, 97, 205
Aegean 34, 60
Aelianus 210
Aequum 64, 106
Agapes, mystical 199
Agathe Tyche 107
Agathos Daimon (Agathodemon) 219, 223, 286
Albums 163, 198
Alexander Christine 35
Alföldi, A. 40
Almus 264
*Alopekis* 110
Altar 263
Altheim, F. 116
Amphitheatres 133
Amphora 230, 235, 260, 263, 269
Amulets 37, 41, 43, 50, 172, 174, 178, 284
Anahita - Anaitis 104-107, 166, 229
    Tauropolos 145, 242
*Anathemata* 175
Anatolia 30, 112, 154
Antiquaries, Renaissance 23
Antonescu, T. 25-28, 35, 78, 104, 108, 137, 141, 277
Antonines 81, 82
Aphrodite 106, 107, 210, 211, 229 (see also Venus)
Apogenesis 189
Apollo 155
Apotheosis 197
Apples 263-264
Apuleius 234
Apulum 66, 81, 196, 245, 269
*Aqua vitae* 107, 210, 229, 230
Aquileia 62

Aquilo 205
Aquincum 56
*Arbor vitae* 242, 264, 275
*Archigallus* 240
Architectural cave, symbol of Cosmos 66
Ares 125
Aries (see Ram)
  Degree in Mysteries 252-255
  Mask 215, 237, 243, 248; At Banquet (q.v.) 259
Armenian plateau 145
Artemis 104, 107, 125, 134-136, 145, 166, (see also Diana) 243
  At Ephesus 105; Tauropolos 242
Asa 107
Ἄσημα ὀνόματα 74
Asia Minor 30, 105, 109, 148, 160, 161, 197
Asclepius 155
Assyria 192
Astarte 42, 211, 229
Astrology 186, 192, 193
Ašvins 33
Atargatis 104, 105, 108, 145, 211, 226, 281
Athenaeus 105
Attendants 122-137
  Carrying fish 195; None with Dioscuri 169
Augusta (Nemesis) 133
Augustine 208
Aurelian 47, 79, 82, 184
Auster 205
Axe (double) - *bipennis* 112, 113, 171, 281, 283
Babylon 192
Balkan Peninsula 29, 45, 53, 122, 154, 162, 197
*Balteus* 178, 183
Banat 63
Banquet (Celestial) 194-199
  Razgrad plaques 147-150; Distinct from Terrestrial 287
  (Terrestrial) 252-262
  Concludes initiation in mysteries, in lower register 287
Baptism of blood 239, 242
Bartoli, S. 73
Barboși 254
Basilides 179
Bendis 105, 171
*Benedictio latina* 113, 117
Benoit, F. 143
Bipennis (see Axe)
Black Sea 30, 39, 42, 140, 145, 149, 150, 154
  Greek colonies 44, 46, 155
Blocks 264
Bow 264

*Bracae* 264
Branch 264
Brelich, A. 40
Britannia (Britain) 52, 60, 69, 127, 159
Bronze (Monuments) 59
Budapest Museum 82
Buday, Arpád 31-35, 58, 79, 84, 106, 108, 111, 140, 141, 189, 245, 258
Bulgaria 23, 24, 159
Bull 126, 144, 148, 213
  symbol and sacrifice (cf. Mazdaism) 145
Cabiri 23, 26-34, 42, 47, 58, 59, 104, 111, 118, 137-142, 161, 166, 169, 210, 271
  On Etruscan mirrors 167
Cabiro-Dioscuri 25, 29, 79, 104, 137, 141, 154
  Mysteries 38
Cabirus (the third brother) 106, 137
Cades - cameo 121
Caduceus 137, 265
*Calcei* 128
Campbell, Leroy 49, 76, 106, 109, 187, 188, 201, 210, 216, 223, 229
*Candelabrum* 265, 266
*Cantharus* 71, 227, 229, 230, 266, 270
Cap, Phrygian 110-112, 117
  — of Mithras 223
Capsa 267
Carnuntum 102, 104
Carpathians 197
Carpi 83
Castelu 200
Castor and Pollux (Castores) 129, 163, 165, 169 (see also Dioscuri)
Cautes and Cautopates 129, 157
Chaldeans 193, 194, 196
Chapouthier, F. 33, 34, 38, 77, 141, 142, 207, 280
Chariot, Solar (quadriga) 183, 186, 230
Charlatanism 261
China 30
*Chlamys* 110
Christianity 31, 83
Chronology of DRG plaques 279-280
*Cista mystica* 267-268
  ?lyre? 272; With *lectus triclinaris*; With mask of Aries?; With sphinx = lion 225; With snake 221, 222
Classification of Monuments 280
Clement of Alexandria 208
Club (of Heracles) 268
Cluj Museum 82
Cock 216-219 (see also Elements)
  In lower register 144; In *occultatio* (q.v.) 248; Sacrificed 286: With Nemesis 132; With ram sacrifice 214

Cockatrice 73, 178 (see also Abraxas)
Column with 4 spiral turns 230, 231, 286 (see also Elements, Trajan's Column)
Columns 41
Communion (see Banquet)
*Consecratio* 197, 203
Constantine the Great 79, 82, 97
Copenhagen 78
*Corax* (see Raven)
Corbul de Jos 199
Cornucopiae (two) 102
Cosmos 187
Crater 268-269 (see also Man with arms outstretched)
    Group symbolizing 4 elements 227-231
*Criobolium* 237-243
    ? flaying implement 41; Influence of Cybele cult 262; in presence of an *Aries* 257; Need of cult building 173; On Class B reliefs 235: Purification of *mystes* 259; Ram served at banquet 286; Significance of Branch? 264
*Criotauroboliatus* 241
*Crio-taurobolium* 145, 149, 214, 233, 272, 286
Cronus (see Saturn)
*Cryphius* 255
Cryptograms, magical 73
Cult, Public 232, 286
*Culter sacrificialis* 239, 270
Cumont, Franz 27, 33, 37-39, 53, 172, 173, 200, 205, 228, 229, 277, 278
Cup 129, 235, 258, 261, 268
Cup 268-269
    At both banquets 258, 261; Borne by attendants 129
    In "fishing" scene 235
Cybele 42, 44, 75, 104, 105, 134, 142, 145, 171, 172, 177, 179, 193, 226, 239, 262, 276, 287
Cypress 269
Dacia 25, 26, 38, 40, 41-44, 47, 53, 54, 61, 65-70, 76, 78, 80-87, 90-97, 100, 101, 111, 112, 138, 141, 144-146, 149, 153, 162, 163, 197, 198, 212, 277, 280, 287
    inferior (Lower Dacia) 52, 60, 62, 63, 129, 149-152
    superior (Upper Dacia) 52, 60, 63
Dagger 269-270
    = *culter sacrificialis* 239; Planted in earth as symbol of death 247; Two borne by Hecate 270
Daicoviciu, C. 43
Dalmatia 41, 53, 60, 63, 67, 69, 80, 90, 94, 95, 159, 280, 282
Danube 25, 30, 40, 54, 63, 66-68, 71, 74, 79, 80, 82, 83, 134, 141, 146, 152, 159, 160, 170
Danubian Great Goddess (DGG) (see Great Goddess)
Danubian Rider-Gods (DRG) (see Rider-Gods)
Dea Caelestis 127

Dea Syria 105, 108, 210, 211, 243, 248 (see also Atargatis)
Dea Triformis 135, 136 (see also Hecate)
Decebalus 115
Degrees (see Initiation, also *Aries*, *Miles*, *Leo*)
Δεικνύμενα, τά 177, 246
Demeter 27, 42, 104, 106, 107
Derketo 105, 211
Despoina at Lykosura 107
*Devotio* 233
Diana 134, 136, 171, 172, 189 (see also Artemis)
  At Ephesus 104
Dionysus 61, 125, 155
Dioscuri (see also Cabiro-Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux)
  Interaction with DRG (Two Riders) 161-172
  Absence of attendants 129; Absence of prostrate men 118, 121; Association with Great Goddess (Helen) 104-109, 172; Bearers of Sol's torch 183; DRG distinct from 58-61, 74; Egg (vase) flanked by snakes, emblem of 89, 162, 165; Gnostic links 179; Relationship with DRG, various theories about 26-28, 31-34, 37, 42, 44-47, 50, 93, 139-141, 277-278
Divos 257
Dobrudja 98, 177, 197, 198 see also Scythia Minor
Dog 226-227
  Replacing prostrate man 119
Dōlger, F. 31, 84, 104, 105, 108, 139, 141, 210
Dolphin 209, 210
Dots (ornamental role) 270
*Draco* 113-118
  Connection with snake 221; Dating element 82, 280, 281; Military influence on DRG cult 126
Drobeta 97
Δρώμενα, τά 177, 246
Dualism,127, 148, 165
Durostorum 163
Duthoy, R. 239
Eagle 199-202
  Only with Two Riders 285; Symbol of air 230; With cock 217
Earth 42
Ἡγεμών 185
Egg 162-165 (see also Dioscuri)
Εἴκονες 63
Elements, The Four Cosmic 227-231
  = *Principia Vitae* 208, 216; Mithraic significance 27; Only on Class B pieces 181; Snake-Crater-Lion-Cock group 227 etc.; Symbolized by column with 4 spiral turns (q.v.); Symbolized by Sol's horses 186
Eleusinian Mysteries 233
Ephesus 105
Epona 104, 106, 127, 142-144, 281
Ἐπόπται 233

'Επτάκτις 183
Eschatology 78, 261
Eurus 205
Evening Star 33, 191 (see also Hesperus)
*Exaudentissima* (Nemesis) 133
Φάσματα, τὰ 247
Favonius 205
Firmicus Maternus 187
Fish 208-212 (see also Man "fishing")
  Associated with South Russian goddess 146; Carried by Attendants 130, 195; Caught on a line 234-236; Food to expel demons 261; In all three classes of Monuments 102-103; In Razgrad plaques, ? with Anaitis 148; On tripod 144; Replacing prostrate man under horse 119, 121; Sacred to Atargatis 145; Served at both Banquets 199, 285, 286; Symbolizing water 227
Forms of Monuments (7 types) 279
Fortuna 134
*Fossa sanguinis* 241
Φρίκη 246
Fruit 103, 214, 270 (see also Apples)
Gabare 39
Galati 27
Galice 40, 150
Gallia (Gaul) 52, 60, 69, 127, 159, 228
Gebeleizis 171
Gems 42, 43, 59
  *Gemma Abraxea* of Perugia 178-179; Gnostic 180; Sassanid 140
Genesis 189
Gerhard, E. 25, 28, 277
Gētēh 223
Γέρμανος-Germanus 72
Geto-Dacian divinities 285
  —population described by Ovid (q.v.) 198
Giglioli, O. Q. 42, 73
Globe (Nemesis, Sol, Luna) 132, 271
Gnosticism 178-180, 284
"God of Light" 30
Goddess (see South Russia)
  —, Mother (see Magna Mater)
Gorobkov, V. 33
Gothi 83
Graffito 73
Great Britain (see Britannia)
Great God (see Rider-God(s))
  —in Iran 140
Great Goddess, Danubian (DGG) 99-109
  Fundamental myth 78; Lunar aspect (bull) 145; Syncretism with other Great Goddesses 170-172 etc.
Greece, marble from 60

Greek Colonies (see Black Sea)
Grid (*criobolium* q.v.) 271
Griffon 226
Grotto, Mithraic 57
Guardabassi Collection 178
Halapić 106
Hammer 111
Hampel J. 27, 28, 32, 35, 58, 79, 99, 104, 108, 126, 138, 139, 184, 273
Harpoon 235
Hasps, for suspension of tablets 64, 75
Heaven 42
Hecate 42, 63, 118, 171, 180, 189, 193, 218, 226, 270, 274
    —*Triformis* (with Artemis, Diana, Nemesis) 130-137, 149
Helen 42, 104, 106, 166
Heliopolis 211
Helios 134, 182, 186, 200; (see also Sol)
Heliogabalus 126
Heliolatry 187
Hell 42
Hephaestus 106, 167
Heracles 61, 124, 249, 254
Hermes 61, 167, 216, 218
Heroes 39
Herzegovina 48
Hesperus 186, 284
*Hirsuti* 198
Hittites 30, 192
Hoffiller, V. 35
Honey 260
*Hoplophoros* 124, 155 (see also Attendants)
Horses (of DRG)
    Cult function natural to horse-rearing peoples 118, 160; Solar and funerary symbol 143, 160
    (of Sol)
    Representing the four elements (q.v.) 186, 230
Hrtkovć 124, 238, 254
Hungary 23, 24, 159
Hygieia 61
'Ιαω—Iao 73, 178
Iconography (DRG), Origin of 153-161
'Ιερά, τά 263, 267 n.
Illyrian Emperors 126
Illyricum 163
*In aeternum renatus* 242
*Infusio* 233
India 30
Initiation, Degrees of 249-255 (see also Mysteries)
    Mithraic influence 27
Inscriptions, votive 72-74

Absence 37; Occult 63

*Interpretatio Graeca* 111-112

*Interpretatic Romana* 25, 111, 159

Iran 27, 43, 47, 112, 150, 176, 192

Isis 179, 225, 267, 276

Iskra-Janosić, I. 48, 49, 278

Italia (Italy) 52, 67, 69, 127, 159, 191

Iulia Domna,—Maesa, —Mammaea 82

Iuno 196

—and peacock 203

Iupiter 196, 201

Iupiter Dolichenus 45, 66-68, 78, 110, 113, 125, 127, 142, 174, 178, 179, 200, 201, 207, 276

Iupiter Heliopolitanus 127

Κάλαθος 263

Kalathos-modius (hair-style of DGG) 102

Karagodenać 140

καρδία τοῦ κόσμου (Sol) 186

Kazarov, G. 29, 39, 45, 46, 67, 139, 140, 142, 147, 149-153, 173, 278

Κενῆ 73

Kern, F. 34

*Kernos* 270, 273 (see also Plate)

Kiano (?) 73

*Kibotos* 263

*Koine*/κοινή 42, 176, 179

Kōmlōd 125

*Kostic-Kestos* 107

*Krios* 255 (see also *Aries*)

*Kronos* 63, 134 (see also Saturn)

Kruglicova, T. J. 44

Kubitschek, W. 34

Kufaldzilar 150

Lamps (*Lucernae*) 181, 271-272

Replaced by torch 274; Replacing candelabrum 265; Use at Banquet 238, 260

*Lararia* 70

Lead 59-64 etc. (see also *Plumbarii*)

Indicator for DRG cult 278; Magical significance 63, 70; Pannonian plaques 57; Workshops 54

*Lectus triclinaris* 256

*Legio VII Claudia* 55

Λεγόμενα, τά 177

Lenormant, F. 192

Lion (Λέων, *leo*) 224-226 (see also Initiation, Degrees of)

Companion at arms of DRG and Thracian Rider 119; Inscribed on Monument (192, B) 72; Mithraic influence 286; Symbol of fire in 4-Element group 227-231

*Limes* 125

Loaves 272

Near ram sacrifice 214; Offering to DGG 103
London/*Londinium* (see *Mithraeum*)
*Lucernae* (see Lamps)
Lucian of Samosata 211, 248
Lugli, G. 35
Luna (see also Sol) 181-191, 194-203
  Accompanying Nemesis 131; In Tudor's Class A(c) 95; In Will's category Cl 87; Linked as goddess with DGG 145, 171, 242; Mithraic influence 34, 78, 157; "The superior world" (Ochsenschlager) 107; With cock 217; With ram 214; With snakes 220
Lyre 272-273
Magic 284 etc.
Magna Mater 37, 104-106, 171, 188, 242
Man "fishing" 234-236
  Cult scene 210; Puzzling secret ritual 286
Man with arms outstretched 236-237, 286
Man/Men (see also Attendants)
  prostrate under horses 118-122 etc.
  Decisive against Cabiro-Dioscuran theories 34; Personification of Evil 282
Marble (see Materials)
Marginal decoration of plaques 66-69
Mars 124-127
  Military diffusion of cult 133, 281
Mask (see *Aries*, Heracles, Lion)
Masks, Human 271
Materials 59-64 (see also Lead)
  Unusual variety 278
*Matres* 196
Mazdaism 126, 145, 180, 203, 205, 215, 228, 230, 231, 251
*Megara* 57, 243, 265
Mēnōk 223
*Mensa* (see Table)
Mercury-Hermes (see *Caduceus*)
Merdjany (Kuban) 141
Μιχαήλ/Michael 73
Mikhailovo 150
*Miles* 126, 238, 259 (see also Initiation, Degrees of)
*Militia*, DRG 243, 251, 253
Milk 260
Minerva 196
Mirrors, Etruscan 167
*Mithraeum*, London 55, 176
Mithras/Mithraism 27-30, 34, 37, 38, 42, 44, 45, 47-51, 65, 68, 76, 78, 83, 95, 106, 110, 127-129, 141, 142, 145, 153, 162, 169, 172, 174, 177-179, 184-187, 193, 194, 197, 200, 207, 215, 219, 226, 258, 262, 264, 275, 277
  Ephippos of Hama 220
  Tauroktonos 26
Mladenova, Janka 45, 162, 163

Moesia 44, 53, 54, 61, 65-69, 80, 81, 85, 86, 94, 111, 141, 153-161, 190, 226, 282, 287
  inferior (Lower Moesia) 28-29, 39, 52, 60, 70, 146, 150, 152, 163
  superior (Upper Moesia) 28, 41, 49, 52, 60, 111, 227, 238
*Monopodium* (see Table)
Montana (municipium) 61
Montfaucon, B. 43
Monuments, DRG *passim*
  Supplement 5-8; Newly Discovered 9-22; Purpose served 74-75
Morning star 33, 191 (see also Phosphorus)
Mutton 199 (see also Banquet)
*Mystagogus* 214, 233, 247, 249, 250, 253, 255, 259, 261
Mysteries (*teletai*) 232-234 etc.
  Model of Mithras and Cybele 284-287
*Mystes/Mystae* (see also Initiation) 249-250
  Banquet 259-261; Bearing club 268; In *crio-taurobolium* 240; In *Dea Syria* ritual 248; In Mithraic ritual 189; Naked or clothed 240, 245; Ordeals 246; Purification rites 233
Myth of DRG 153, 233
  Principal scene of plaques 279
Naissus 41
Nemean lion 254
Nemesis 130-137 (see also *Occultatio*)
  Among attendants 96, 118; Assimilated to DGG 100, 107; —to other Great Goddesses 170, 171; At Banquet 256; Divine vengeance 122, 282; Earlier interpretations 25, 26, 27, 37, 44; Globe attribute 271; Guardian of secrecy and silence 132, 213, 237, 244, 246, 248; Magical, chthonic, occult 63, 180, 193; Military favourite 126; With cock 217, 218; With dog 226
*Nimbus*, Solar 189
  Seven-rayed (see Number symbolism)
*Nomina arcana* 74, 279 (see also Rider-Gods)
Noricum 60, 69, 80
Novae 61, 97, 163
Nowotny, E. 27, 28, 104, 108, 138, 141
Number symbolism 251-252
  Three 63, 91, 193; Seven 185, 193
Objects, Symbolic and cult 262-275
  Unidentified 275-276
*Occultatio* 243-249
  Abramić first to explain 29; *Bracae* 264; Bull 144; Cock 217; Nemesis never absent 132; Ram 214, 286; Standard mystery scene 233; Tree 274
Ochsenschlager, E. L. 49, 97, 107, 109, 124, 188, 201, 208, 211, 223, 238, 242, 243, 261, 278
Odescalchi Collection 73
Odobescu, A. I. 25
*Oenochoe* 273, 275
  Coupled with lion 229

Oescus 54, 62, 97, 112, 203, 275
Oil 260
*Omnipotens* (Nemesis) 133
Opaka 150
Orchanie 163
Ordeals (see *Mystes*)
Orient 43, 47, 108, 127, 192, 202
Orlea 106, 108, 203
'Ορώμενα, τα 177
Oroszlán, Z. 40
Osiris 225
*Ostentatio* 245
Ovid 117, 198, 285
*Paludamentum* 178
πανaής 263
Pannonia 28, 39-41, 47, 53, 54, 62, 63, 65-71, 80-83, 87, 97, 98, 102, 206, 210, 211, 238, 287
  —inferior 41, 48, 49, 52, 53, 60-61, 227
  —superior 52, 61, 62
Pappas 171
Pârvan, V. 33, 114, 277
*Patera* 273
Pausanias 233
Peacock 203-204
Pectorals 75
Pelikán, Oldrich 43
Peloponnese 165
Perugia (Etrusco-Roman Museum) 42, 218 (see also Gems)
Phosphorus 186, 284 (see also Morning Star)
Phylacteries 172-178
  Cumont's theory 37-38; — rejected 50, 278, 284
Picard, Ch. 122
Pick, B. 139
*Pileus* 128, 161
Planets, Seven 193
Plate (*Kernos*) 273
Pliny the Elder 192
*Plumbarii* 54, 97, 183, 185, 186, 204
Plutarch 208
*Pneuma* 230
Poetovio 29, 101, 238, 253, 254
Pollux (see Castor)
Polos 108
Polychromy 71-72
  Clothing rendered by 112; Stone made more attractive by 279
Pompeii 272
Pompilus (πόμπιλος) 27, 210
Poroina (rhyton) 141
Porolissum 102

Porphyry 57, 228, 229
Potaissa 235
Pottery (Dacia) 199
*Principia Vitae* (see Elements)
Probus 79, 184
Προστηθίδια 62
Provinces (Danubian) 23 etc.
Prudentius 240, 241
*Purgatio* 230
Pythagoras 188
*Quadriga* (see Chariot)
Quiver 264
Ram 212-216 (see also *Aries*, *Criobolium*)
  Constellation 165-166; Fundamental symbol of DRG 144, 286; Head (Mask) 120, 128, 130, 165, 237, 253; On Razgrad plaques 148; Sacrifice 235, 237, 238; Skin 244, 248
Ratiaria 165
Raven 202-203
  Symbolizing air 230; Divine messenger 285
Rays, Seven (see Number symbolism)
Razgrad plaques 147-153
  Iconographic variants of DRG cult 282; Kazarow-Tudor hypothesis 46; Recalled by Dacian bronze pieces 90-91; Rhyton, Single Rider with 273; Rostovtseff's theory 39-40
*Regina* (Hecate, Nemesis) 133, 136
Registers 76-98 etc.
  Three predominant 279
Renan, E. 187
Rhea 104
Rhine 127
Rhineland funerary stelae 119, 121, 122
Rhodopian massifs 154
*Rhyton* 273-274
  At Banquet 258; Borne by attendant 129; Of Karagodenać 140; Of Merdjany 141; Of Poroina 141; Offered by DRG to DGG 110, 117, 259; Two with crater 268
Rider, Thracian 153-157 etc.
  Absence of prostrate enemy 118; Attendants borrowed 128-129; Costume similar to DRG 110; Cypress 269: DRG, Relationship with 23, 26-30, 37, 42-45, 46, 50, 74, 172-174, 179; DRG, Wrongly identified with 79, 138-140, 277; Doubled 165; Epona 143; Fish 145; Monuments inspired DRG cult 81, 85, 95, 282; Monuments numerous in Lower Moesia 39, 53-54; Monuments, Shape of 65, 67, 68
Rider-God(s), Danubian (DRG) 109-118 etc. (see also Thracian Rider)
  Cradle of cult Southern Dacia 282; Different theories 137-142; Distinction from other Rider-Gods 58-59; Final disappearance of cult 287-288; Local and aniconic roots 174-175; Names unknown 74, 279; Nature and origin 142-147; Women, cult possibly open to 178

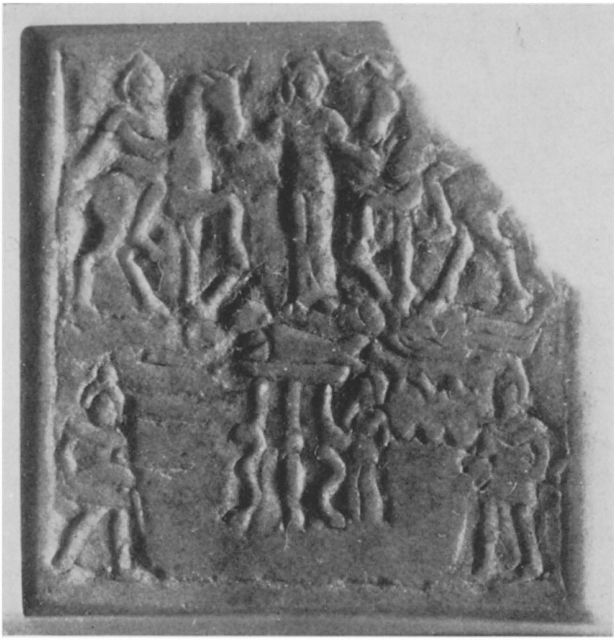
        *One Rider* 153-161 etc.
        *Two Riders* 161-172 etc.; One dressed as Mars (q.v.) 124; Temples, Need for 70
        *No Rider* (Class C Monuments) 98, 197-199
Rider-Gods and rider peoples 141
Riders, Thraco-Mithraic 53, 277
Rod and line (see Man "fishing")
Roman Army 113-114
    Influence on cult 126
Rome, Bronze relief from 128, 269
    Saved by Lower Danube soldiers 126
Romula-Malva 54, 61, 62, 97, 112, 121, 124, 183, 203-205, 267, 275
Rostovtseff, M. 29, 30, 32, 33, 39, 42, 45, 80, 81, 85, 105, 109, 126, 130, 140-142, 146, 148-154, 161, 210, 245, 255, 277
Rumania 23, 24, 50, 159
Russia, South (Rostovtselff's theory of DGG's origins) 106, 109, 140, 142, 146, 210 (see also Razgrad plaques)
Sabaoth 179
Sabazius 31, 42, 45, 75, 78, 110, 127, 148, 174, 177, 223, 276
*Sacella* 55, 56, 173
Salonae 41, 238
Samothrace (Cult and Mysteries of Cabiri q.v.) 25, 27, 29, 108, 140, 167; *Pompilus* (q.v.) 210
*Sancta* (Nemesis) 133
Sanctuaries (Temples) of DRG 56-58
    Must have existed 46, 175, 278; None yet found 37
Sarmatians 30, 39, 42, 44, 83, 150
Sarmizegetusa 56
Sassanids 192
Saturn 37, 63 (see also Lead)
Sava 48, 54
Saxl, F. 33, 182, 228, 229
Schneider, V. 138, 141
Scythia 47, 140, 216 (see also Dobrudja); Great Goddess (q.v.) 39, 42
    Minor (Class C plaques) 89, 197, 198
Scythian Migrations 30, 44; Draco wrongly attributed 113
Seasons, The Four 205-206; cf. Elements and Winds 231; Mithraic influence 34, 285
Selene 105, 136 see also Luna
Semesilam 179
Serpent see Snake
Seure, G. 34
Severi 82, 97, 102, 184
Silvanus 155
Singidunum 195
Σιωπή 246
Sirmium 41, 48, 54, 62, 205, 211
Siscia 41, 62
Škorpil, K. 34

Snake(s) 219-224
*Agathodaemon* 286; Coiled around tree 155; Companion of DRG 121; Cosmic 184 etc.; Emerging from *cista mystica* 267; Influence of Sabazius 31; Link with Isis 267; Symbol of earth in group of Elements (q.v.) 227-231; Two flanking egg or vase 164-165
Sol (see also Chariot, Helios, Luna) 181-189
Always in upper register 78, 95; Assimilated with DRG 284; At Celestial Banquet 194-203; *Koine* of mysteries 42; Link with Dioscuri 32; Mithraic influence 34, 177 etc.; Representing third (supreme) world 107; With cock 217; —Nemesis 131; —quadriga in archivolt 57, 87; —ram's head 214; —snakes 220
*Sol invictus* 230, 280
Soldiers, Influence of 126
Spandarmat 106, 107
Sparta 104
Spear 113, 114
*Spelaea* 56
Spheres of the Universe, Three 57, 77, 78
Sphinx 267
Skull, Human 31, 271
Stars 190-194 (see also Evening—, Morning—)
Denoting vault of heaven 195, 284; In upper register 78
Stelae (see Rhineland)
Stone (see Materials)
Στρατιώται 111
Sucidava 54, 61-63, 82, 97, 235
Σύμβολα, τὰ 177
Symbols, Mystic 207-231
Σύμβωμοι 176
Σύνναιοι 55, 56, 176
Syncretism 77, 280
Syria 47, 104 (see also *Dea Syria*)
Széged 31, 32, 63
*Tabellae defixionum* 42, 63, 179
Table (*Mensa*) with fish 209; with ram 253
One leg (*Monopodium*) 101, 103, 199, 209
Three legs (Tripod) 144, 196, 253
5 or 6 legs 103
—(*Mensa Delphica*) 100, 102, 103
—(*—triclinaria*) 257
*Tabulae devotionis* 37
*Taeniae* 238
Talismans 174, 177, 178
*Taurobolium* 237-243 (see also *Crio-taurobolium*); Purification by 259
Taurus (Constellation) 145
*Teletai* (see Mysteries)
Temples (see Sanctuaries)
Θεοί (see σύνναιοι, σύμβωμοι)
Terra Mater 104, 106

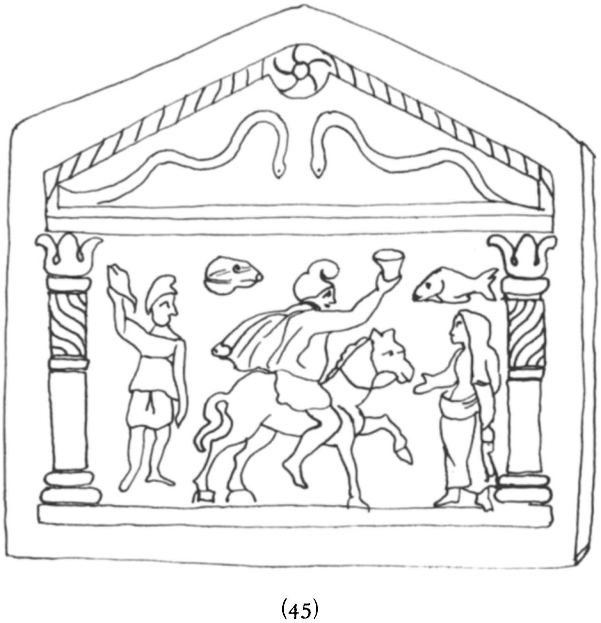
Terracina relief 112, 184, 189, 196
Terracotta (see Materials)
Tessera(e) 43, 72, 75, 255
Theophrastus 203
Thrace 27, 29, 40, 52-54, 60, 61, 65, 69, 80, 105, 140, 141, 154, 163; Predilection for magic 192; Recruits 127 (see also Rider, Thracian; Riders, Thraco-Mithraic)
Thraco-Getan population 192
Thunderbolt 274
*Thyrsus* 274
Tibiscum 60, 92, 162, 194, 195, 234, 235, 244
Tîrgovişte 114
Tocilescu, G. G. 25
Todoričene 156
Tomis 117, 198
Torch 274; Cautes and Cautopates 129; Sol 183
Tortoise 120, 165
Trajan's Column 115
    Dacian Wars 81, 141
Tree (of Life) 274, 275
Triad, Capitoline 196
    —Heavenly 194-199; Celestial Banquet (q.v.) 285; symbolic 47, 88, 91, 92
*Triclinium* 256, 257
Tripod (see Table)
Troesmis 254
Tudor, D. 35, 37, 45, 46, 49, 50, 80, 84, 94-98, 140, 142
*Tunica manicata* 110
Vase 103, 260 (see also Vessel); Confused with egg 169; Flanked by snakes 164 ff.; "*Pommières*" 275; Water symbol 227, 230
Vault of Heaven 57
*Velatis oculis* 250
Venus 104
Vermaseren, M. 66, 67, 224
Vessel 275
Vesta 171
Victoria 123-124
    Dating element 44, 163; From military pantheon 126, 281; In upper register 96; Marking DRG as triumphal divinities 137, 166
*Victrix* (Nemesis) 133
*Villa romana* and *suburbana* 56
Viminacium 55, 61, 66, 158, 235, 239, 267
Virunum 106, 109, 238,239, 275
Vratza 163
Vulcan 167
Vulić, N. 35
Wenzel Marian 48
Wiesner, J. 39, 142
Will, E. 45-48, 54, 70, 76, 85-93, 122, 141, 142, 151, 153, 163, 173, 267

Winds, The Four 204-205
    Mithraic influence 34, 285; Number four 231; Personifications 185
Wine 260
Women and DRG cult 242
Wood (see Materials)
Workshops, Metal 54 (see also *Plumbarii*)
Yugoslavia 23, 41, 48, 63, 159
Zagreb Museum 82
Zalmoxis 25, 33, 171
Ziehen, J. 28, 104, 139
Zoroaster 30

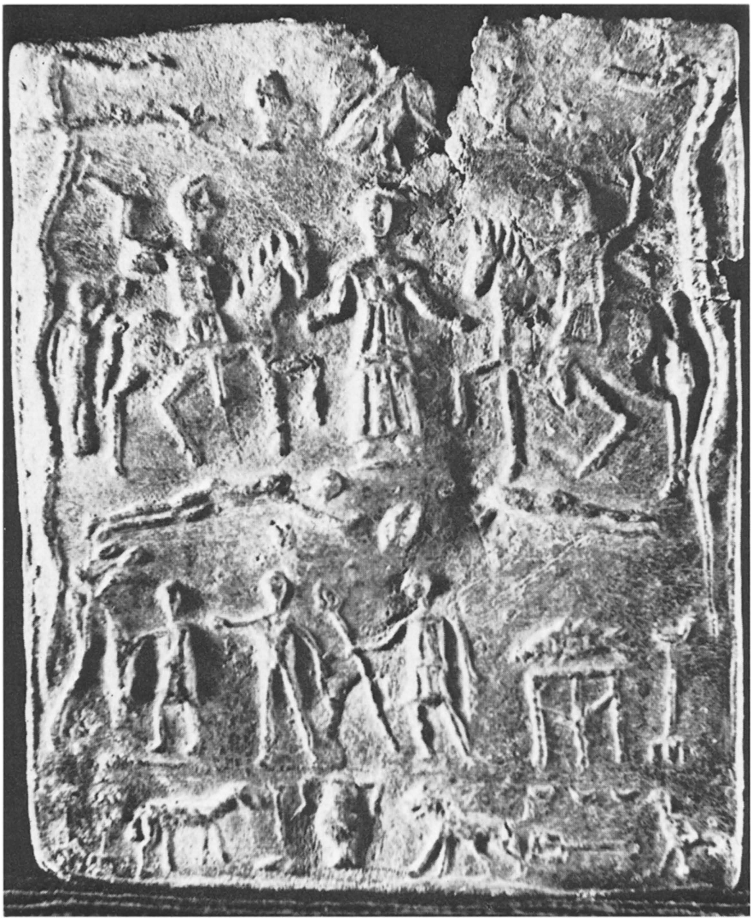
# PLATES



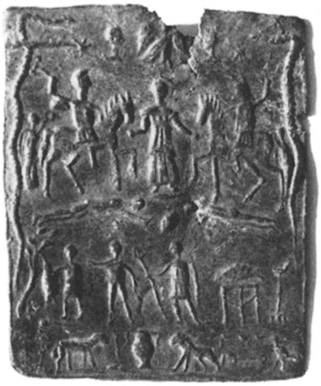
(7)



(45)

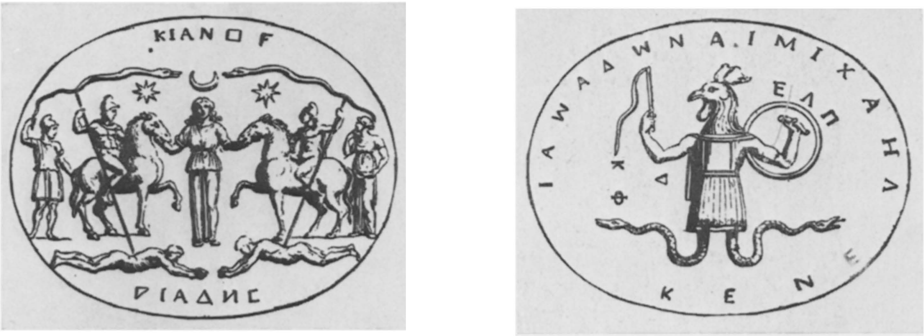


(146)

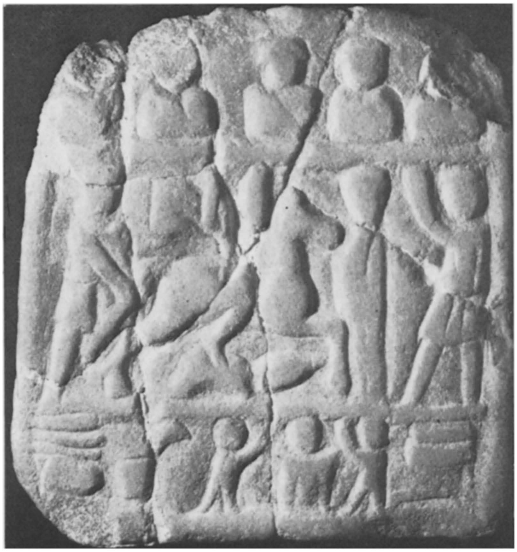


(146)

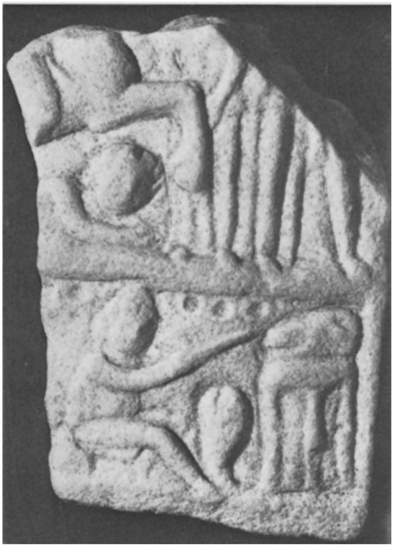
# PLATE III


.ΚΙΑΝΟF
ΡΙΑΔΗC
ΙΑWΑΔWΝΑ.ΙΜΙΧΑΗΛ
ΦΚΔ
ΕΛΠ
ΚΕΝΕ

(189)

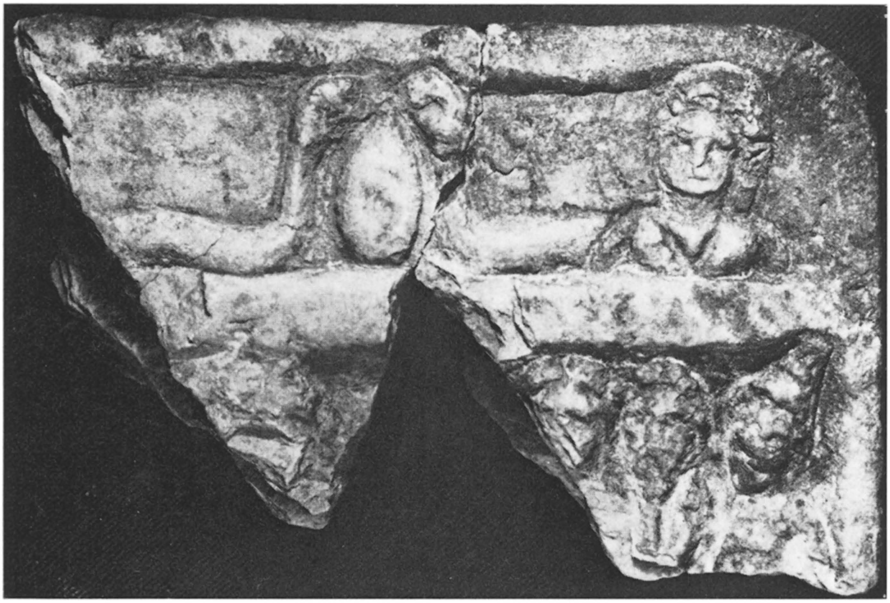


(200)

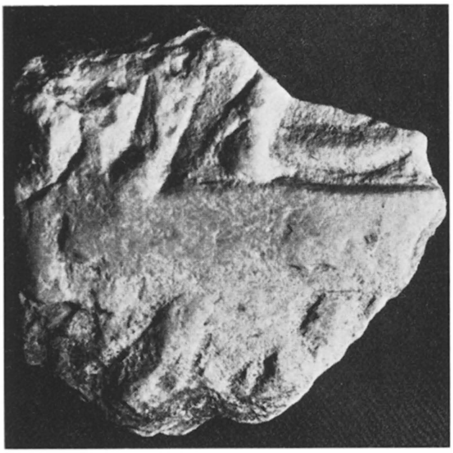


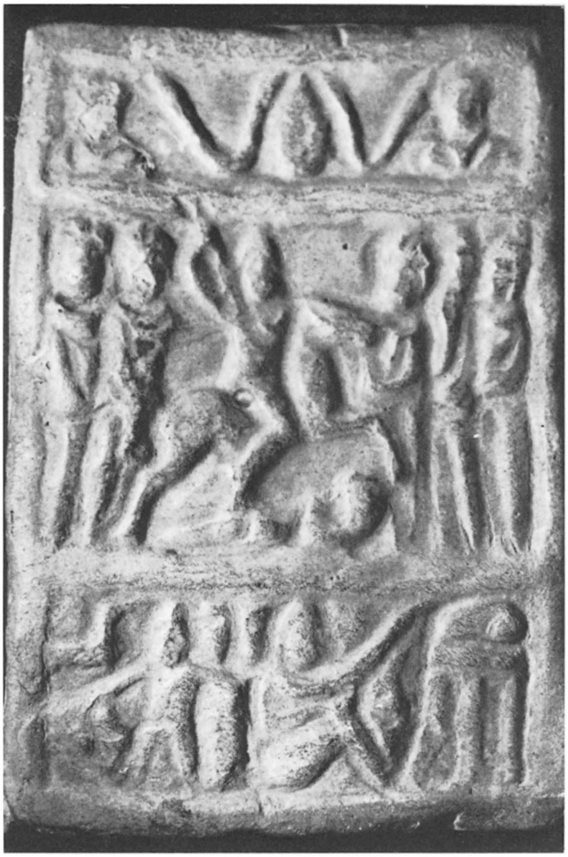
(201)

# PLATE IV



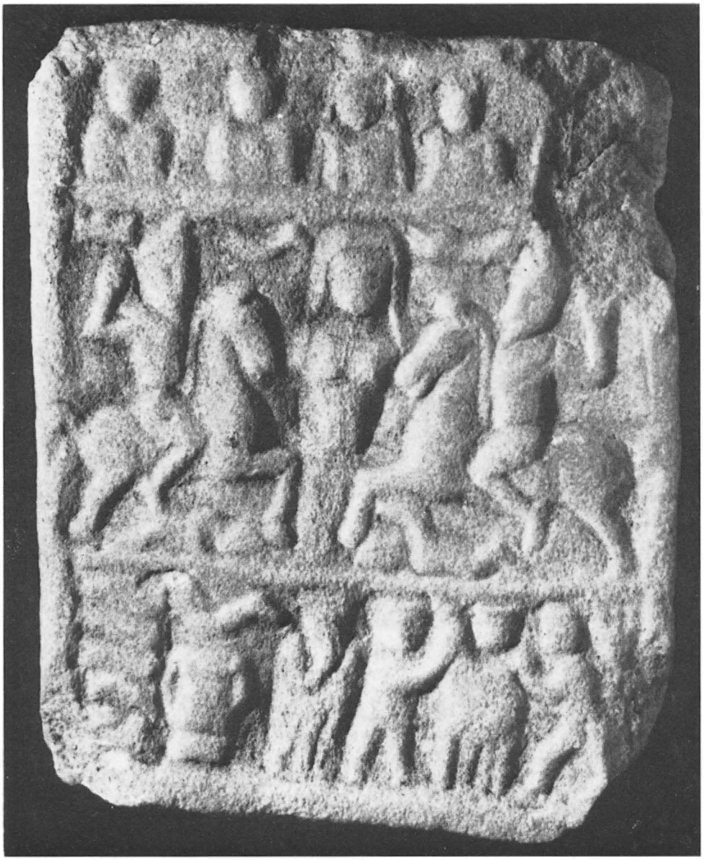
A-B



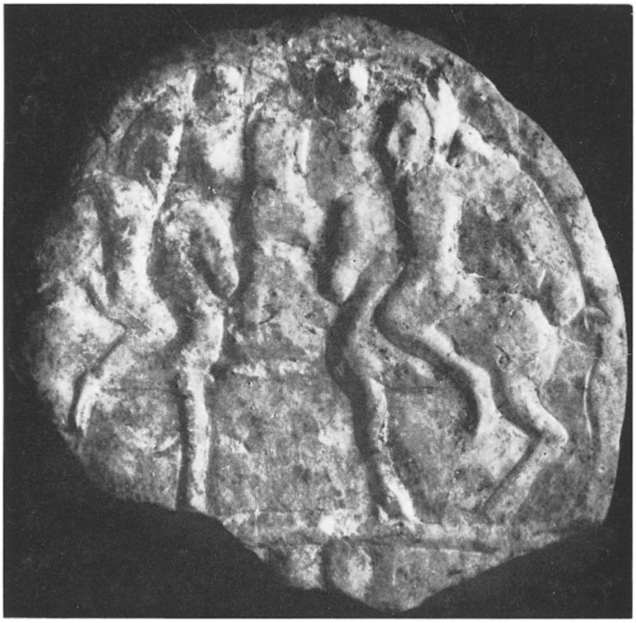


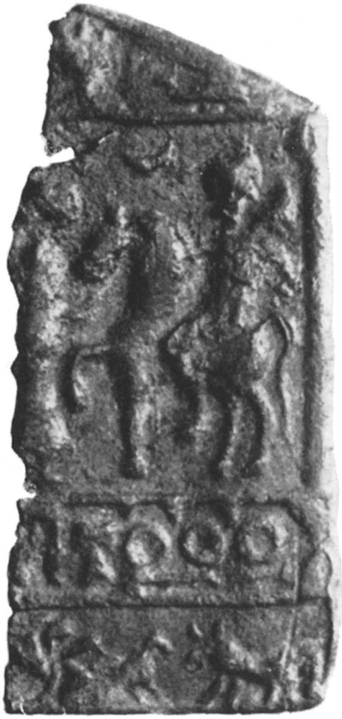
(203)

PLATE VI

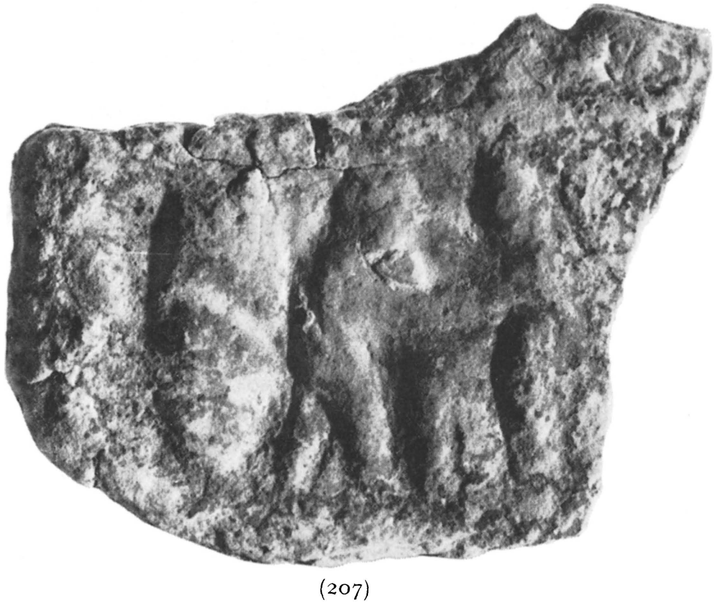


(204)

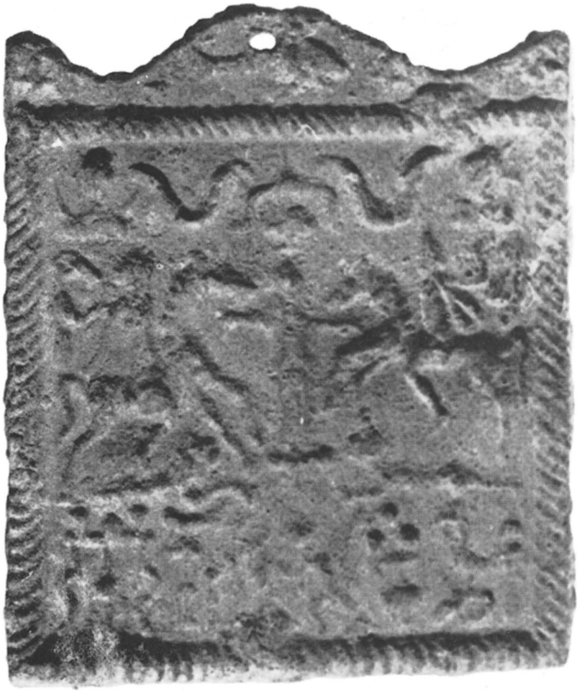




(206)

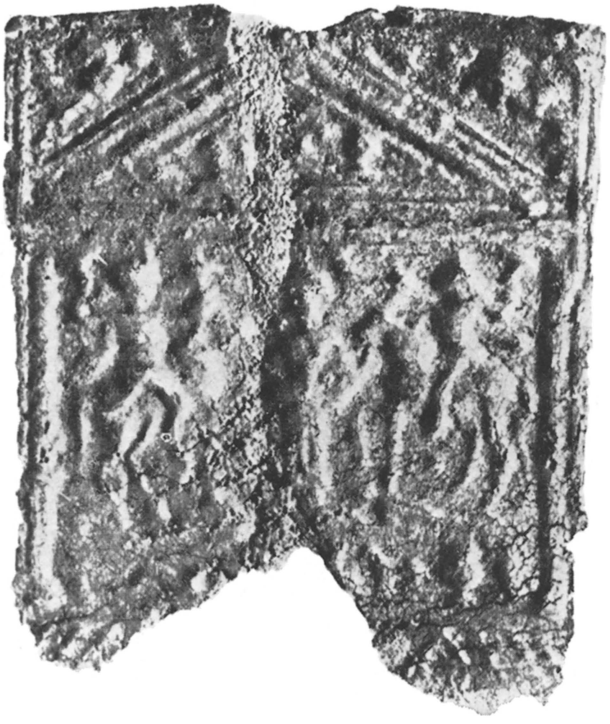


(207)

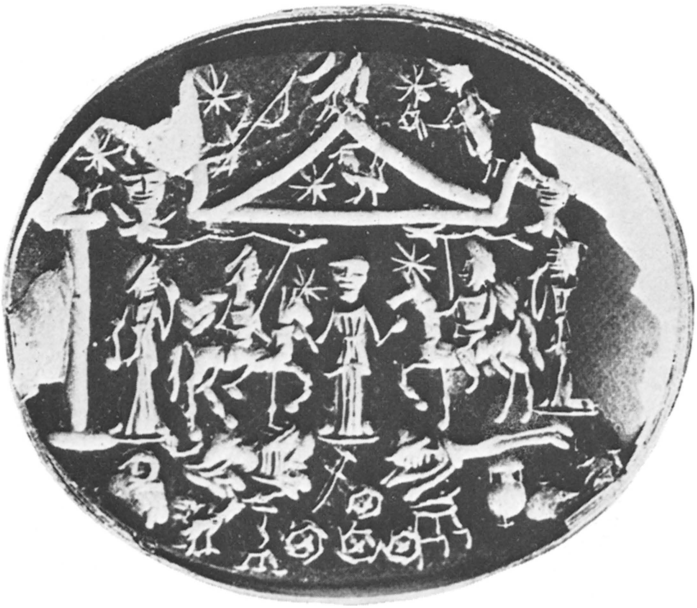


(208)

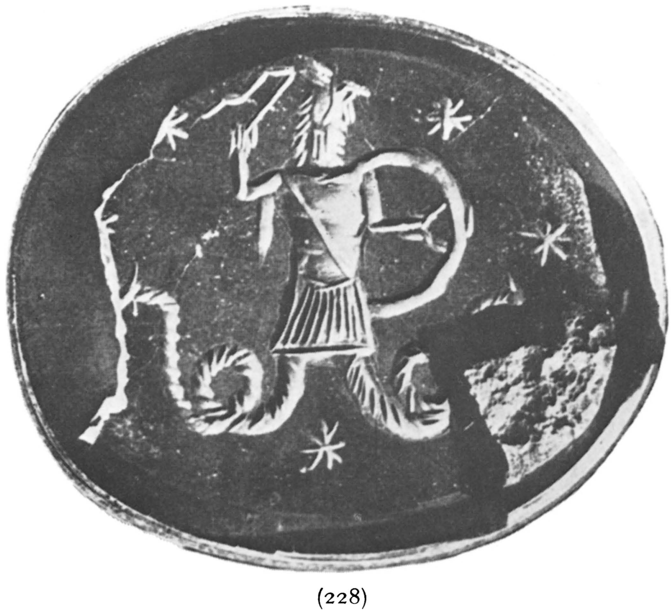
## PLATE X

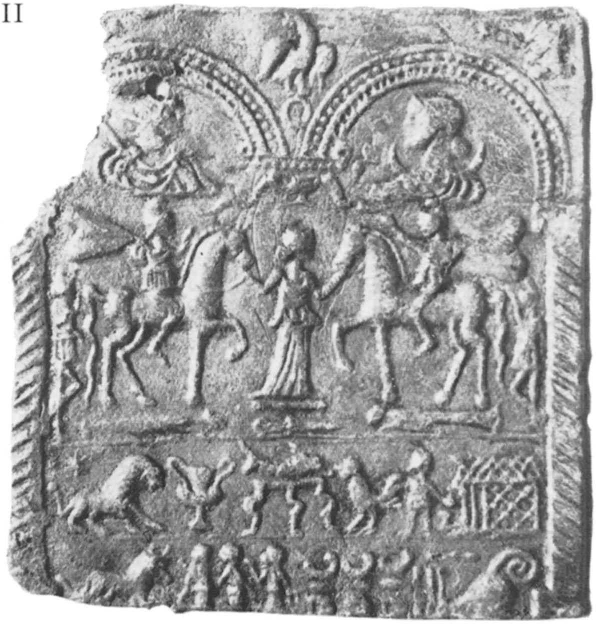


A

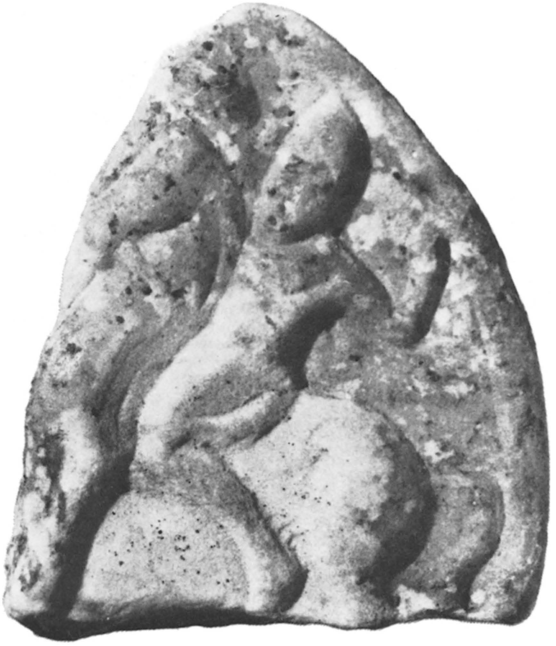


B

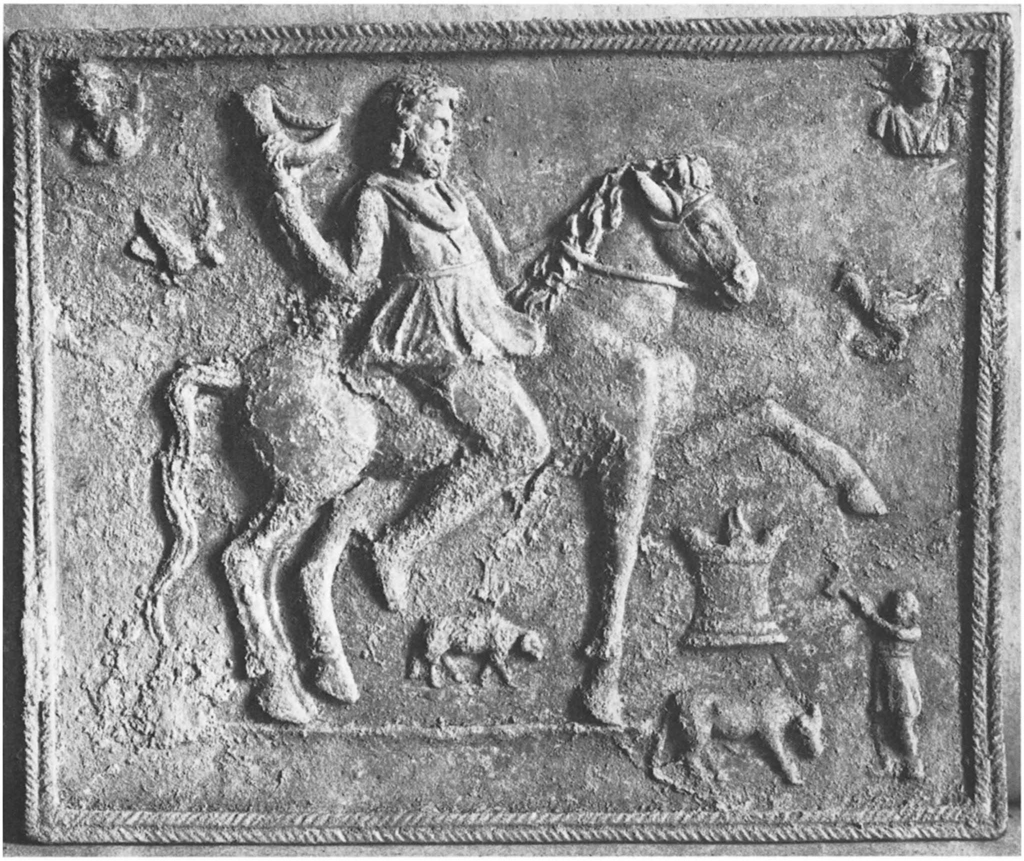




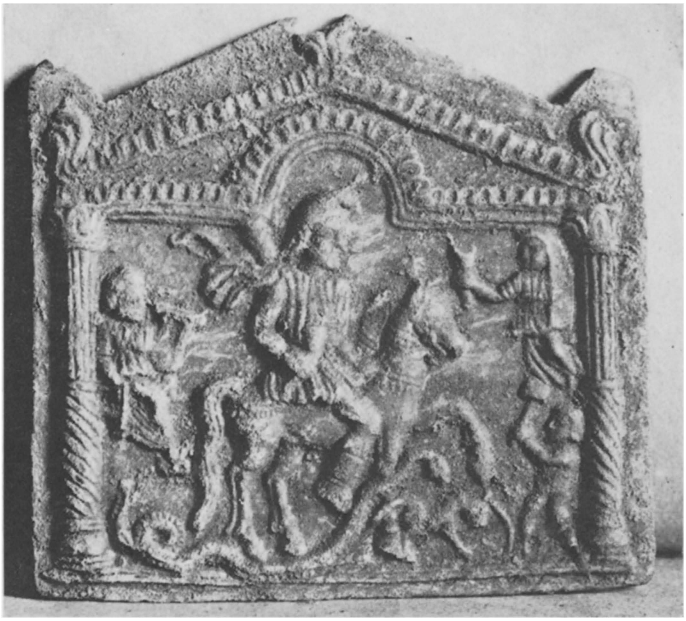
(230)



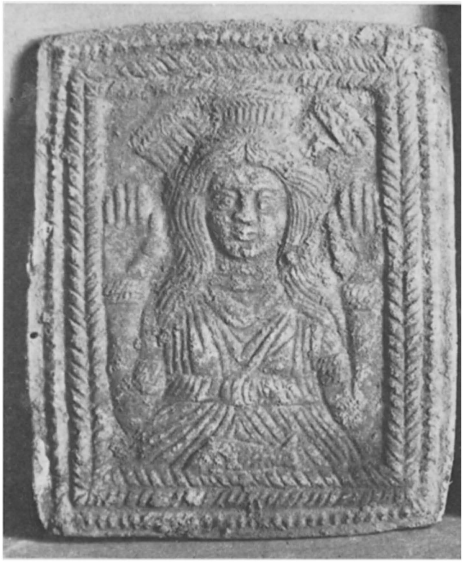
(229)



1. Razgrad

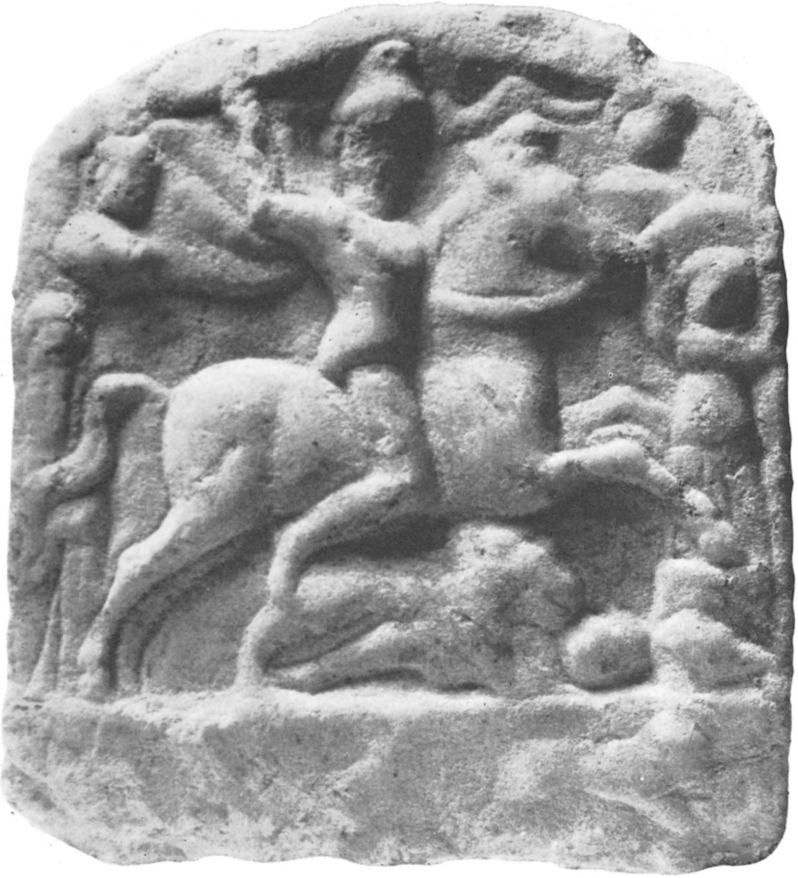


II. Razgrad



III. Razgrad

PLATE XV



(232)

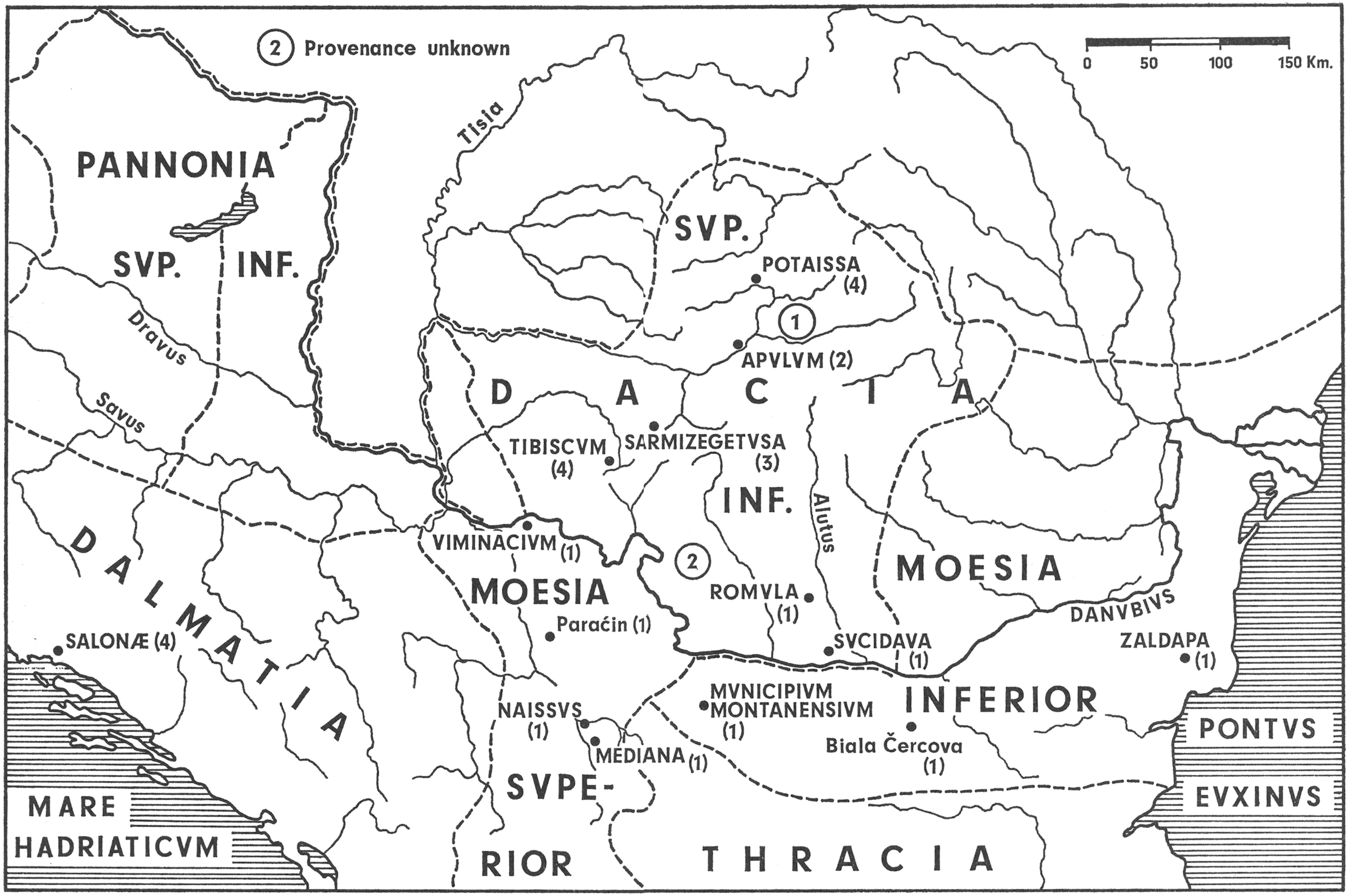

② Provenance unknown
0
50
100
150 Km.
PANNONIA
SVP.
INF.
Dravus
Savus
Tisia
SVP.
POTAISSA (4)
①
APVLVM (2)
D A C I A
TIBISCVM (4)
SARMIZEGETVSA (3)
INF.
Alutus
VIMINACIVM (1)
②
ROMVLA (1)
MOESIA
Paraćin (1)
DALMATIA
SALONÆ (4)
MOESIA
DANVBIVS
ZALDAPA (1)
SVCIDAVA (1)
INFERIOR
MVNICIPIVM MONTANENSIVM (1)
Biala Čercova (1)
NAISSVS (1)
MEDIANA (1)
SVPE-RIOR
THRACIA
PONTVS EVXINVS
MARE HADRIATICVM

Fig. 1. The distribution of the single-Rider monuments (Class A).

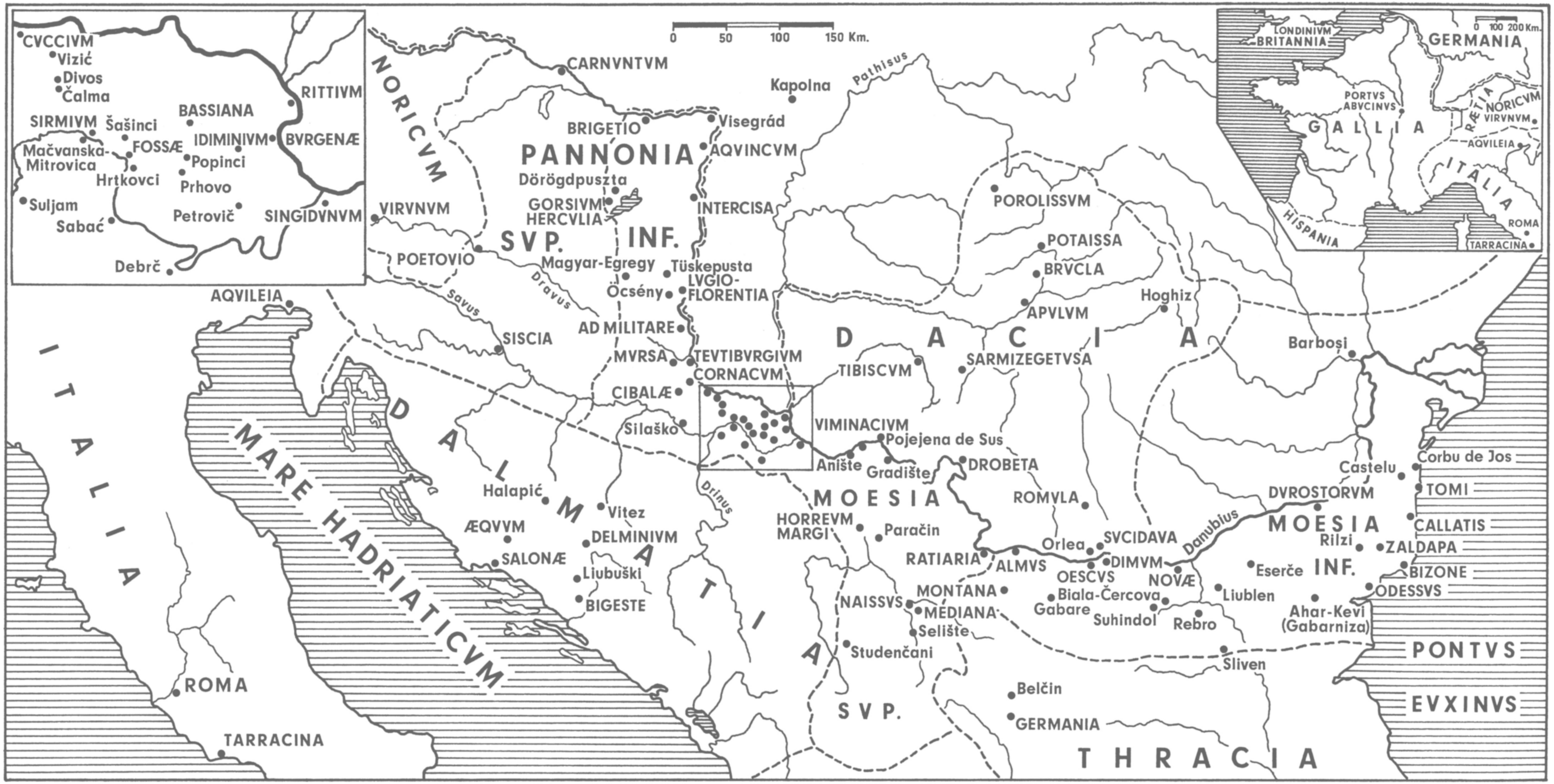

CVCCIVM
Vizić
Divos
Čalma
SIRMIVM
Šašinci
BASSIANA
RITTIVM
Mačvanska-Mitrovica
FOSSÆ
IDIMINIVM
BVRGENÆ
Popinci
Hrtkovci
Prhovo
Suljam
Petrovič
SINGIDVNVM
Sabać
Debrč
0 50 100 150 Km.
NORICVM
CARNVNTVM
Kapolna
Pathisus
BRIGETIO
Visegrád
PANNONIA
AQVINCVM
Dörögdpuszta
GORSIVM
HERCVLIA
INTERCISA
VIRVNVM
SVP.
INF.
POETOVIO
Magyar-Egregy
Tüskepusta
LVGIO-FLORENTIA
Öcsény
Dravus
Savus
AQVILEIA
AD MILITARE
SISCIA
MVRSA
TEVTIBVRGIVM
CORNACVM
CIBALÆ
Silaško
ITALIA
MARE HADRIATICVM
DALMATIA
Halapić
Vitez
ÆQVVM
DELMINIVM
SALONÆ
Liubuški
BIGESTE
Drinus
ROMA
TARRACINA
POROLISSVM
POTAISSA
BRVCLA
APVLVM
Hoghiz
DACIA
Barboşi
SARMIZEGETVSA
TIBISCVM
VIMINACIVM
Pojejena de Sus
Anište
Gradište
DROBETA
MOESIA
ROMVLA
HORREVM MARGI
Paračin
Orlea
SVCIDAVA
RATIARIA
ALMVS
DIMVM
OESCVS
NOVÆ
Danubius
NAISSVS
MONTANA
MEDIANA
Biala-Čercova
Gabare
Suhindol
Rebro
Liublen
Selište
Studenčani
SVP.
Belčin
GERMANIA
THRACIA
Sliven
Corbu de Jos
Castelu
TOMI
DVROSTORVM
MOESIA
INF.
CALLATIS
Rilzi
ZALDAPA
Eserče
BIZONE
ODESSVS
Ahar-Kevi (Gabarniza)
PONTVS
EVXINVS
0 100 200 Km.
LONDINIVM
BRITANNIA
GERMANIA
PORTVS ABVCINVS
GALLIA
RÆTIA
NORICVM
VIRVNVM
AQVILEIA
ITALIA
HISPANIA
ROMA
TARRACINA

Fig. 2. The distribution of the two-Rider monuments.